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*Some Confessions
of an Average Man*

SOME CONFESSIONS OF AN AVERAGE MAN BY RICHARD KING



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MOST BOOKS ARE DEDICATED TO *PEOPLE*.
YET, IT APPEARS TO ME, THAT *PLACES*
PLAY ALMOST AN EQUAL PART IN THE
HAPPY MEMORIES OF LIFE. SO I DEDICATE
THIS LITTLE BOOK TO THE COAST VILLAGES
OF NORTH CORNWALL—OF WHICH I HAVE
SO MANY HAPPY RECOLLECTIONS

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*Some Confessions
of an Average Man*

The Average Man

EXCEPT on those more or less rare occasions when he is required to cheer, or applaud, or register his vote, or fight his country's battles, the Great World ignores the Average Man. He is so very average. And there are so many of his prototypes everywhere. The earth seems over-full of him and his fellow-men, and the churchyards and cemeteries are crowded with his corpses. On his tombstone are engraved the words: "Here lies the body of John Smith and Mary Ellen, his wife" — and thus briefly is how we regard them when alive and remember them when dead. The Average Man is, metaphorically speaking, that "blur" of human faces which we see when we gaze out of a window into some crowded thoroughfare. He leaves no distinct impression upon the mind, other than a vague surprise that, if God makes Man in His own image, He must be very unimaginative. Sometimes we ask ourselves the questions: Where the Average Man comes from? whither he is bound? why exactly he is born at all? A flock of sheep; ants running about an ant-hill; fish

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swimming in a tank, seem to possess as little separate individuality as the Average Man. He jostles us in the street; he fills the theatres, cinema and dance halls: millions of his kind are carried hither and thither daily on the railways, roundabouts, chars-à-bancs, switchback railways, tea-shops, the cheap reprint, the “best seller,” the desiccated-soup tablet — were founded for his convenience, his amusement, or his nourishment. It is so arranged that thousands of him are born, brought up, educated somehow, and let loose upon the labour market daily; while the authorities see that even the epitaph on his tombstone shall conform strictly to the conventional faith and hope in a glorious Resurrection. True it is, that occasionally he obtains a certain ephemeral fame by murdering or being murdered, gaining the V.C. or being run over by an omnibus; but the fact, as chronicled in the popular Press, obtains less space than the one which informs a thrilled world that while walking on the Terrace, the Prime Minister’s hat was blown off during yesterday’s gale and was last seen floating down the Thames in the direction of Greenwich. For the rest, he is just a plain Nobody, one of an immense crowd of Nobodies, whose value is only to be found in the aggregate

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and who, as an individual, counts as practically nothing.

What the Average Man really thinks is more or less a mystery. For one thing, he is not expected to think at all — at least, he is not expected to think for himself. His Betters are there to think for him. His convictions, taken *en masse*, are called Public Opinion, and his Betters, unless Public Opinion synchronizes with their own point of view, refer to it with a sneer. It is something to be “converted,” or, if conversion be impossible, then it must be suppressed. His Betters are never tired of constructing gates through which they invite the Average Man to follow them. If he refuses, or informs them rudely that the Land of Promise on the other side seems as dreary as the Land of Failure he is asked to quit, then, according to his Betters, the “Country is going to the dogs.” And “that’s all there is to that”— according to them.

What the Average Man feels in his own heart is practically unknown. What he really thinks is even a greater mystery. Safely it may be asserted that his thoughts are nebulous for the most part. For constructive thinking he does not possess the necessary leisure. He is too much occupied by the problem of living ever to

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worry long over the problem of his being. Whatever happens — he accepts by making the best of it. He may protest to other average men, or he may approve; but whatever he may think in the confines of his own best parlour or the saloon-bar of his favourite pub, his thoughts rarely express themselves in action. To be unconventional invites dire calamities, and Freedom of Thought requires, at least, a private income of five hundred a year. But the Average Man has to keep within the good graces of his employer, and nothing ruins the chances of a humble employee more quickly than to look, act, or think unlike every one else. The Average Man may not be very wise, but experience has made him "sly." Besides, there is a certain wisdom in knowing instinctively the appropriate mask, and in that wisdom the Average Man is extremely "knowing."

But sometimes, when the Average Man feels himself secure of his company, the mask is doffed, and there is no greater surprise, or moment of keener gratification in all that long, laborious study by which the student of human psychology seeks to appraise his fellow-men, than that moment of self-revelation. The mask is the mask of a slave, but behind it, furtively

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maybe, but clearly nevertheless, the mind of the Average Man is wayward and free. His feet may tread wearily some office floor; some lonely furrow; some over-heated factory; his body may follow silently the long, long blind-alley of some relentless routine, but his mind is often on the hill-tops where the four winds of heaven allow no dusty convention to settle, no stale tradition to vitiate the freshness of the open spaces. He may look like one of those many millions, who all seem to have been turned out by some unimaginative Creator from a common mould, but often, behind that dull, uninspiring aspect, there flashes occasional wisdom which, were it only to act according to the truth which it illuminates, would bring about the Millennium to-morrow. The private opinions of the Average Man are often so extraordinarily sane, that one of the mysteries of existence is how so much sanity can lend itself to projects so palpably cruel and idiotic, and accept without demur an unnatural fate so greatly at variance with natural laws. Alas! the trouble of the Average Man is that he is invariably inert until a crisis stirs his lethargy to action. His wisdom is the wisdom gained only by everyday experience — and that is the kind of wisdom which generally makes us wise

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when we are too age-weary to profit by it. Tyranny battens upon ignorance — and a wise old man, or a wise old woman, is a discounted quantity in the schemes of tyrants or the unjust law. Moreover, the Average Man is also unimaginative. What does not immediately concern himself is no concern of his. He cannot perceive the truth that what concerns others will also, sooner or later, concern himself — even though indirectly. Not for him is the knowledge that the Future will only be the Past entering by another door unless we deliberately set out to bolt and bar its return. For the Average Man, the Past is forgotten, the Future doesn't matter (he will probably, so he hopes, be dead before the next world-calamity happens), and the Present has to be lived through somehow — the jolliest way for preference. And this philosophy of his is at one and the same time his blessing as well as his curse. For it makes him the victim of any threadbare tradition; it makes him the easy prey of every political experimenter; it prevents him from altering Things-as-they-are to mould them after the ideal of Things-as-they-ought-to-be. Thus his children and his children's children are led back into that morass of ignorance and muddle from which a vigorous and enlightened

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preceding generation might have saved them.

Valiant though the Average Man may be in the confines of his own best "parlour," as a member of the community he is extremely docile. Towards his self-professed Leaders his attitude is a curious mixture of admiration and indifference. They inhabit another world, and he has no imagination to perceive that the conclusions at which they arrive in this other world will have a direct influence on the happiness and prosperity of his own. Whoever shouts loud enough and long enough is sure of an immense following among Average Men. As a thinker he is much more amenable to noise than logic. Whatever discord may masquerade as "melody," the Average Man is always ready to pay the piper. He may protest; he may grumble; but he foots the bill on every occasion. No sacrifice is too great for him, providing he is told that such a sacrifice is expected of him by his Betters. He is at once a hero and a child. The Arts are not for him. After his day's work is done, he must amuse himself — or peradventure go mad. His work is generally monotonous enough in all conscience. In the few hours of liberty which are his daily allowance of life-as-it-should-be-lived, his spirit is too weary to soar

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very far. So it declines — and the public-house, the cheap cinema, trashy literature, jingly tunes, music-halls, race-meetings, among other recreations, prosper exceedingly on this mental descent through fatigue. Education alone might perhaps prove to him his importance as a human being. His Betters, however, see to it that it doesn't. Regard the kind of education the Average Man receives! What is it, for the most part, but so many years of utter boredom, endured under a system of education which seems deliberately to make the acquirement of knowledge (such as it is!) the very dullest thing in life. And at the end of his term of enforced ennui — what has the Average Man learnt? Practically nothing which will be of any real service to him in after life. Because of his uselessness, he is obliged to fulfil duties requiring only the very rudiments of thought. And in the fulfilment of those duties he remains, more or less, all his life; until at last, one wonders if he can possibly be anything more than a kind of living machine — less free than the animals and infinitely less to be envied than they are.

Yet only Fools treat the Average Man for the dull witless creature he so often appears to be. The Fools only perceive the World through their

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own aspect — which is the aspect of their situation in life, their class, their religion, the little niche they have made for themselves in that world which immediately surrounds them. The Fools regard those in a more lowly position as if their lowliness had denied them wisdom; as if they were of inferior clay; as if, in the Great Scheme, their importance was negligible. Nothing surprises them more than when they realize that the mean Average Man holds, and holds with all the strength of his convictions, an opinion contrary to their own. Because he is "beneath" them in the worldly things which do not matter, except in a worldly sense, the Fools seek to blackmail the mean Average Man until he at least shows an outward compliance to what the Fools consider is for his benefit — which is generally something which will continue to keep him "mean" and very average. And alas! the Average Man is sly in his docility. He pretends to believe the Fools — and the Fools are supremely complaisant in their self-satisfaction. They believe that the THINKING is done entirely by the Great Ones of this earth. Whereas, the real thoughts — the thoughts which have helped to revolutionize the world — have fought their way upward from below, and are irresistible since

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they have sprung in the first instance from FEELING and not from THOUGHT. Human progress has been made far more through suffering than through intelligence. But it is a long and up-hill progress, though in it the Average Man has played unconsciously the most important part. It takes generations of injustice before justice is even considered. Not until the concentrated misery of the Millions begins to make itself felt do their Betters realize that the best means to preserve their own prestige is to accord to the lowly their simple human rights. What the world will be To-morrow is born rarely in the minds of those in High Places, but in the minds and hearts of those living in the meanest thoroughfares of the land. Advancement is fought for by those below and only accorded to them by those above — as a last resort; self-preservation, pretending an inspired magnanimity. The Millions have out-grown most of those institutions which believe that they not only represent them, but lead them towards temporal and eternal salvation. The Human ideals so proudly uttered by statesmen, politicians, philosophers and priests, have been the inarticulated ideals of the Nobodies long before these individuals lent them voice. The Millions have to fight so long and so

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strenuously merely to preserve life, that they never lose sight of the real essentials of existence. Subtleties of thought or expression are not for them. All their life long must they meet and deal with the primary fact — plain, without intellectual “trimmings,” practical to a degree well-nigh commonplace. It has made them crude, but it has also made them honest. Tell me what the Lowly think to-day, and I will tell you what their Betters will think — nay, MUST think — to-morrow. Philosophers only give back to the world what the world has thought already and been unable to express. It is the same with politicians, writers, all those who place themselves at the head of mankind and pretend to direct its progress. They succeed only in so much as they “voice” the inarticulate yearnings of the common average man. For the convictions of the Average Man are convictions born of suffering, of injustice, sometimes of despair. His tragedy is that he has often to wait so long for some one who will voice his wrongs. In the meanwhile he falls an easy prey to those who would batten upon his helplessness, to those who would profit by his inability to express himself in words and his lethargy to explain himself in actions.

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The Passionate Cycle

FROM the age of seventeen to forty-five, it may be said that the Average Man — and this, of course, also applies to the Average Woman — falls in love every three years. He may not fall desperately in love, but he is desperately in earnest for just so long as his infatuation may last. And the “affair” nearly always begins in the same way. He is attracted by some one of the opposite sex. He assures himself that it is a very mild attraction, easily managed, and not at all likely to sweep him off his feet into that morass wherein lovers flounder, striving to find secure ground on which to build up a mutual life together. Sometimes he will disguise the preliminary symptoms by the word “friendship” — a platonic affection, founded upon mutual interests, mutual enthusiasm, a love of beauty, or nature, or merely physical perfection. But at any moment, he feels that he could break away. He is so very sure of himself; so firm a master over his own emotions. Providing, too, that nothing untoward happens to the placid flow of

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this quite disinterested passion, it may at last subside into that grey and pallid state in which dead infatuations of a very ephemeral kind live, only half-remembered by both men and women. But alas! — or, perhaps, we should say “Thank Heaven,” since Love stirs up the turbid water of the most stagnant river of the day-by-day — something untoward does happen. A rival may appear on the field. Jealousy may be aroused. The slightest thing may turn a mild infatuation into a desperate love affair. And when he is in love, no man is master of himself any longer. That is the tragedy of it — or the blessing, whichever way you regard those periods of temporary madness which turn existence into a state of emotional unrest. At the beginning he never realized what was happening to him. He felt too sure of himself. His interest was just the interest of a man in a woman who pleased his fancy, a woman who seemed to understand him a little better than other women. Then came the moment when he discovered that he had to fight for that position in her affections of which, up till that moment, he felt so secure. From that instant he becomes a slave to love; and, whether it bring him happiness, or whether it bring him despair, or whether, at last, the agony

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too long drawn out breeds indifference, he is in each circumstance a feather blown hither and thither in the wind, a plaything in the hands of circumstance.

The most humorous fact about falling in love is that we always deceive ourselves that we have fallen in love for the **VERY LAST TIME**. We may not be so dishonest with ourselves as to believe that the woman (or man) we love is absolutely our soul's ideal, but we feel that he, or she, is the nearest to that ideal we shall ever encounter in this life, and, in any case, well worthy of all those sacrifices which Love, even Lust, demands. We think of the others we have loved; but, as we look back upon them, we only remember those things which we believe killed our adoration of them. We have numerous excuses. We may even laugh at the memory of those protestations which once we uttered — those declarations that not even death would divide us from those who held our heart and body so completely in their hands. Nothing is quite so dead, or so humorous, as a dead infatuation. In the same way, nothing is so gloriously alive, or so utterly lacking in the rudiments of self-criticism, as the passion which now fills our hearts. It is real love at last, the more precious in that it has

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been so long delayed. For it we are ready and willing to sacrifice everything, consecrate to it all that remains to us of our lives. Indeed, the more supreme the sacrifice, the more whole-hearted the consecration. Others may jeer at us, or condemn, or offer us battle; but the more they condemn, the more furious the fight, the more pride we feel in our love, the greater we will endure all things for love's sake. The old adage, about true love never running smoothly, is only too true. If it did run smoothly, it would probably change quickly into indifference. The reason why marriage is so often the death of love, is that it demands from us none of those dramatic sacrifices, sheds on our lives none of those startling limelight effects, by which, and in which, we feel we are holding the centre of the stage and Nature is merely the scenery and all the rest of humanity simply supers. It is a glorious feeling, an ecstatic moment, and without it life would seem only one long commonplace round of eating, sleeping, working, being bored, and dying. Only when we are in love do we realize that life is gloriously worth while. So long as we are in love, there seems every justification to go on living. Otherwise . . .

And yet, when we begin to fall out of love —

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what a relief, what a blessed, blessed relief! It is like coming through a serious illness, into the placid state of convalescence. "Never, NEVER again!" we say to ourselves, as we once more pick up those threads of everyday existence where we threw them down — three, six, nine, months (eighteen months is generally the life of what the Average Man calls "love"), perhaps two years ago. And how pleasant these threads now appear in their eternal drabness. Now we feel that we can once more live our own lives. In love, we sacrificed our own life for the happiness of another; or maybe we tried to dovetail our own existence into theirs, in the belief that two destinies could be so commingled as to run as one. Experience taught us that each of us not only lives out his life alone, but, for the most part, must do so. Love makes us believe that we can march towards death hand-in-hand and that even death will not sever the purely human tie. There is ecstasy in that belief; but alas! ecstasy is an ephemeral apotheosis. We are lucky if we can share even half of our real selves with another for very long. Most of us have to be content to find complete understanding here and there. God alone knows us as we know ourselves, and only He seems really to

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know us, because in our happiness, in our pain, in our inner laughter and in our tears we seem to be sharing them with that mysterious Someone — who seems always to walk with us through life unseen; that mysterious Someone, who sometimes we believe we have found in human flesh, calling that “ belief ” Love; but who yet seems to escape from us at last and becomes once more that “ unseen friend ” whom most of us think of when we think of God, and who never seems so real, so near to us, as when we are in trouble or alone.

That is the reason why falling in love is sometimes such a dangerous proceeding. When we are in love we “ give ourselves away ” so completely. We think we understand; we believe that we understand; so the “ soul ” throws down the barriers which it erects in its own defence against the world, revealing to the loved one all its secrets, opening the door to all its most guarded sanctuaries. A kiss, a pressure of the hand, a look — by these things does the “ soul ” feel itself justified in its deliberate revelation. We mistake the language of Sex for the poetry of the mind. It is only when Sex has spoken that we realize that the “ soul ” behind has said nothing at all, nor ever had anything to tell

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us of those things which our own heart yearned so ardently to hear. And alas! there are no precautionary measures. For sometimes — so little do we really know ourselves — we mistake our own sexual desires for the desire of the spirit to find communion with another's. It is so fatally easy to clothe physical perfection with all those spiritual attributes which belong to the "soul." If every woman wore a yashmak until the eve of her wedding, there would be a great many engagements broken off at the last moment. When the world speaks of marriage as a lottery, it really means that, not until the sexual impulse is satisfied, do a man and woman really know if their hearts and minds be in even quasi-communion. Which is distinctly unfortunate for lovers, since the world has so little sympathetic understanding for those who fall out of love — too late. If only people would look upon love as a kind of necessary but quite unimportant aberration — amounting almost to a disease — the tragedy of lovers who had ceased to love might then not be quite so terrible, such a very unforgivable misfortune. This may, of course, sound cynical; but then, we are all more or less cynical, when we are not in love, even though we are unshakably optimistic when we are. For the misfortune

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of love is that it deceives lovers so successfully regarding its permanence. It seems to be founded upon rock, when in reality that rock is too often only a stage "prop" compiled chiefly of cotton-wool. Few people possess that understanding pity which weeps for the fate of those who, believing they were building up a palace upon granite, have to face at last the fact that they must be content with a hutment built upon the sand. And yet it is better to build foolishly than never to build at all. Cynically though we may regard Love, its disillusionments are the greatest educational factors in the growth of the soul. For you can never love without learning something — even though it be only your own incapacity for sustained emotion. Love reveals far more than it obscures. The best that lies within you can find so few outlets in the hard, matter-of-fact, commonplace routine of the Everyday. For a brief period lovers live up to the "best" that lives within them, and the memory ought never to fill them with shame, though it may often fill them with regret — because it died too soon. The woman who has loved most forgives most readily — and what is sympathy but the capacity for forgiveness? For just so long as you have been in love, you have been unselfish,

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thoughtful, ready and willing for any self-sacrifice; for an all-too-brief period you have wandered in spirit among the gods on Olympus. Without that passionate season you might have gone on your own selfish, smug, matter-of-fact way unheedful of the "song within the song" which is the symphony of living. You may have made a fool of yourself in the eyes of the world, but it was a divine folly — and because of it your soul has expanded and developed. It is comparatively unimportant whom you may love: the essential thing is to love at all. Without these periodical waves of exotic passion, your "soul" would rarely leave the earth. You may perhaps forget the ecstasy, but unconsciously it will have taught you many things in regard to the essentials of life and happiness. Only the complete fool ever regrets his folly. The wise man understands that without that deviation from the common and estimable round, he would not be so wise to-day. Love is at one and the same time a divine, as well as a tiresome "interruption"; but it is more "divine" than tiresome. It may make you swerve suddenly from that straight line along which you intend to pass your life, but sometimes the experience gained in the by-paths is the most valuable experience

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of all. And Love is the only thing which will thrust certain men and women out of the soul-deadening "rut" of their everyday routine. And to be forced out of that "rut" from time to time is necessary to the soul's salvation. You may come back to that "rut" with thankfulness in your heart, but though your return may find you sadder, it will certainly find you wiser, even though your wisdom be that tragic wisdom whose lessons are the lessons of delusion. After all, until you have suffered profoundly through love, you can never realize those quiet depths in which the essentials of a happy life exist. Until you have once loved desperately, unhappily, you can never know what real love may mean. The man who has never loved unwisely and too well, has never yet loved at all. Avoid love — if you can; but, having fallen in love, do not hesitate before the abyss, or to gain the heights to which it may eventually lead you. Nothing worth winning is worth winning without sacrifice, and even if the reward be unworthy of the sacrifice — the spiritual courage which lent that sacrifice strength will endure with you through all your life. So long as you can face the criticism of the world, in regard to yourself, unflinchingly, it matters little what sorry figure you may cut in the estimation

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of that world. The world can offer you nothing which you cannot find for yourself — if you try hard enough. And in love you so often find that precious possession which you have searched for and never before found. It may only be a “glimpse,” but after all, the second-best is generally all that we ever do find in life that we may guard in perpetuity.

It is all a question of the difference between anticipation and realization — and love is its finest example. But it is sometimes wonderful to consider what you can do with the second best, when once you have decided to make the best you can of it. Married people are adepts at this kind of game. They have to be if they are to continue to be married. The world may regard cynically the fact that the ecstasy of their early love has become the commonplace friendship of the married state, but that is because the world can never perceive there is a very essential blessedness in being merely commonplace. They have had their hour of ecstasy, and to all outward appearances it has passed away as completely as if it had never been. But it hasn’t. They are guarding its memory: it will come to life again later on — not necessarily as passion, but in love for their children, for their fellow-

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creatures. For love is a wonderful adventure — and always to venture is to gain knowledge. It may wreck your life from the point of view of your worldly estate, but to your own understanding it is the one great influence which will strengthen and deepen, enlarge your sympathy and permit your inner vision to penetrate into the very heart of life.

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Forlorn and Unimaginative Men and Women

THERE is a certain type of Woman for whom I have never yet decided within myself if I feel contempt for her or a certain grudging admiration. It is the type of woman who has so far risen above the weakness of her sex that she cares not how she looks, nor what she does, so long as she did much the selfsame thing yesterday, the day before that, and almost as long as she can remember. At twenty-five, or round about that age, she gave up being young at all and became entirely "middle-aged" in the less broad and understanding significance of that period of life. Now at forty-five, or fifty, she seems to have renounced all hope of everything and to have resigned herself to the fact that she is "on the shelf," and that the prime duty of those who are thus situated is to deny themselves every sign of being merely human and to become just one of those who constitute the wall of unaired "wadding" against which youth and new ideas, and every semblance of change, even for the better, hurl themselves entirely without success. She stalks through the world in ugly, but

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comfortable, boots, dresses her body in any old garment — chosen, it would appear, because it displays all her less admirable points — and is to all intents and purposes a “third sex,” with strong leanings toward the neuter gender. She is conservative, not through conviction, but through nature. There is nothing “human” about her; or, if there be, then she has for so long suppressed it, that it only reveals itself in a kind of furtive spite, a bold denial to others of any joy which has not been sanctified by moral tradition, dating from the era of religious persecution. She may be married, but she is generally a spinster, and every country village is her rural home, though her urban inclinations incline her towards Bath, or Bournemouth, or any of those inland watering-places wherein “retired” people form among themselves an exclusive society without any moral, social, or intellectual significance. To talk to her is like talking into “space,” and the walls with which she has surrounded herself are topped by bits of broken glass which lacerate those who would venture to scale them or find ingress thereto by seeking sympathy. Whether there is a wild and lovely garden enclosed within those angry barriers, no one seems able to discover. No one ever pene-

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trates its solitude. I don't think there is. You cannot grow flowers without their scent being wafted by the breeze so that the arid space surrounding them is exquisitely perfumed. The forlorn clothes these women wear are but a symbol of their own philosophy. They seem neither to ask for love, nor wish to give it. They cling desperately on to "revealed religion" and "The Thing," and by these things they live: it is apparently their only hold on life.

Yet some time, in the dim long ago perhaps, these women — and there is also an identical male type — must have been young and joyous, and not above those human weaknesses which primarily belong to Sex, but are at all times so very pleasant, even if fraught with danger. Once upon a time, passion must have knocked at the door of their sanctuary, tempting them to come forth into the world and to live as men and women live who are only weak and human. Once upon a time their minds must have harboured reprehensible thoughts, their hearts urged them towards the lure of unknown adventure, their "soul" cried out for "light" in the dark alleys of doubt along which at some time or other in life the "soul" is forced to wander. But their expression tells no tale; they seem

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to have passed through the turmoil of their inner life unscarred by any of those conflicts which wage perpetual war within the confines of our own consciousness. There seems to be no living force within them, except the force to resist the onslaught of those things which do not merit resistance — at least, not a prolonged defensive. Perhaps they make vain efforts to preserve their right to belong to humanity by performing “good work”; but because they seem to have no heart, and consequently scant sympathy and no understanding, they perform them in the wrong way, yet are too self-satisfied to perceive the miscarriage of their good intentions. Alone among those influences which struggle to render happier the human weal, are they *personaæ gratæ* in those temples dedicated to dead faiths, outworn traditions and those whose fetish is an inward compliance to an outward respectability.

There are times when I ask myself the question — Of what good is this type of man and woman to the human World? There are moments when, hearing how the young and vigorous die gloriously, I wonder at the divinely inspired design which takes so much living potentiality and leaves so much spiritual atrophy behind to

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clog the wheels of human progress through its imperviousness to new ideas. For this type of man and woman is a clog on the wheels of progress. Any change, no matter how long overdue, is to them the only battle cry they ever hear. And hearing that cry, they cling mollusclike to those old rocks, of which it can be said that the only beauty they possess lies in their age. They are those who live as if they believed far more firmly in the reality of the devil than in the charity of a God of Love. And yet, I suppose, they have their usefulness, as everybody has in this world — even though they may only represent a “bad example.” Without them, the world might perhaps advance too quickly, and advancing in such haste, rush too blindly in the wrong direction. For, alas! it is a fact, that unless ALL MEN advance, none of them really gets much further. As the strength of a chain lies in its weakest link, so civilization must be judged, not by those in the front of progress, but by those in the rear. The human world must advance TOGETHER, if it is ever to arrive at the Millennium. And the “human wad” — constituted by this type of man and woman — is, as it were, a brake steadyng the more impulsive idealists. The very spongelike quality of their

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resistance is an incentive to new Ideas to gather greater and greater strength. There is nothing more encouraging to the frittering away of the fruits of success than success too easily obtained. Opposition is always the more powerful, since it is more concentrated. And the Human Wad is useful because it gives to Change, by opposing it, the time and opportunity to THINK, and in thinking it may purify its thoughts of much that is unessential, not to say trivial. So in the midst of the ever-recurrent bloodless revolutions by which Humanity is slowly working out its own salvation, the Human Wad sits quietly disapproving and KNITS. Well, there is a certain subtle criticism in knitting — when you come to think of it. And that criticism is — that the world cannot turn its back deliberately on its own past; that the dead are never so really powerful as when they *are* dead — that their ideas tinge the thoughts of at least three generations who come after them, and that each age represents in itself some acme of Truth, and that the Future, if it is to be perfect, will preserve to itself that vital Truth for which each succeeding age stood, embodying it into one perfect philosophy, or as nearly perfect as it is possible for preternaturally imperfect beings to live up to.

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On the Defensive

HOW much happier life would be were we not always bound to be on the defensive when in communion with our brother men! We seem to live among people who are always preparing to pounce upon us, and so we have to pass our time endeavouring to escape capture. That beautiful ideal called "family life" is in eight cases out of ten a collection of people living under one roof, all trying to defend themselves from each other. We spend our lives perpetually excusing ourselves, or unnecessarily explaining our motives, or fibbing our way out of those minor difficulties which, though they are of no importance, may quite easily land us in an unpleasant dilemma. Mary, for example, goes upstairs and locks herself in her room. A simple and ought-to-be quite an easily understood action: She wants to be by herself; she wants to think; she wants to lie on her bed and go to sleep. But before she goes upstairs, or when she returns to the bosom of her family, she will either have to state (a) that she didn't feel very

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well; (b) that, although she didn't feel very well, she did not require a headache-powder, nor does she consider herself to be in need of a prolonged course of somebody-or-other's "salts"; (c) that she has letters to write; (d) that she is in the middle of an interesting book and wants to finish it — in fact, any reason except the one that she is "fed up," and is temporarily sick of her own associates. Even then she will have to find a reason for (a) why she has a headache; (b) why she can't read downstairs in the drawing-room "like a sensible person." It is, of course, only a teeny-weeny example of what I will call the Perpetual Defensive through life, but, multiplied every day, it becomes at times a quite colossal nuisance! No wonder Mary yearns to go forth into the world to earn her own independence. Independence does mean a possible truce in the daily defensive, and few people would willingly take in exchange the splendours of a royal palace for the blessing of their own bedroom with a good lock on the door. Not, of course, that one's own room is the only way of escape. If you come to think about it, half the time spent in converse with our friends is passed in hiding from them our real thoughts, our real desires, what we were, what we are,

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what we long to be, why we did this, that, or the other — briefly, perpetually trimming our conversation in order that we may not get stuck on one of those porcupine quills which surround most people, and which they never seem weary of pointing in our direction in the fond hope that we shall become impaled thereon, and thus have to explain our position satisfactorily and at close quarters. Dogs do not possess any of these porcupine characteristics; nor does Nature. That is why to be alone with them is at all times so eminently restful. We are full of astounding contradictions, but we suffer from that state far less than from the one which endeavours frantically to dovetail these contradictions until they at least resemble some sort of a conventional whole. As we grow older we care less what people think of us — even our intimates. So we experience more of that happiness which consists in being natural — and let him who disapproves be hanged! It is one of the compensations for having to clamber up towards others sitting fat and comfortable upon “the shelf.” But it is a very blessed compensation. Nevertheless, I always marvel at those people who, being “found out,” waste their time explaining their motives to a world which hasn’t

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the slightest desire to believe them. If you've been "found out," your loss will for the most part be merely the loss of people whose opinion doesn't matter to you. Moreover, it will at least cement the friendship of those who really do understand you and love you. There is a certain truth in the belief — expressed, if I remember rightly, by Mr. Norman Douglas in his book "Alone" — that it is necessary, every so often, to do something so outrageous that everybody except those who really know you, will drop your acquaintance like a hot brick. But few people possess the necessary courage to achieve this state of beatitude deliberately. Failing all else, they will write a book about themselves — a book in which they will appear as a pure white dove pursued by revengeful sparrows, a kind of crucified god going through an unmerited agony in exile or, peradventure, in Upper Tooting.

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Pagan Sunshine

SPRING sunshine is a very pagan thing. At least it makes one feel pagan — and that in a life of one commonplace fact following another along the “rut” which so often seems to promise delight and generally manages only to reach complete boredom, is a most fascinating experience. It does us good to feel pagan from time to time; it does us more good to be pagan occasionally — even though, for the most part, we have to pay dearly for having danced to the tune of our desires. But that, after all, is better than never to dance at all. You’ve simply got to pay for playing in this world, but half the happy memories we store up for our old age over the fireside centre around just those circumstances at which people who are never tired of feeling holy horror at other people’s joys, feel the most holy horror. I never admire the Human Turnip, though ofttimes I envy him his placid repose. It must be strangely peaceful never to stir up, nor want to stir up, those primitive desires which some call “original

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sin" and others designate as "mud." To have no "past" worth remembering, except in all mental torpidity, must make life an experience restfully monastic. And yet I'm not quite sure that the boats inside the harbour appreciate their security half as much as those which enter it battered after a long storm. At any rate, it is something to have weathered a storm, even if victory finds our dream-boats sadly in need of repair. You do, after all, know then what a storm is like, and a great emotional experience is never wasted — though it may leave you at last utterly weary, utterly worn out. The Temple we build up after the first Temple has been rudely blown to atoms by experience is at all times more solid than the one it replaces, even if less ornate; its foundations are firmer, even if the edifice itself resembles less the white perfection of a Christmas cake. After all, tears which we shed for lost illusions help to clear our vision and wash away a lot of dust — gold-dust though it be — from our eyes. The education is bitter at the time, but the knowledge gained thereby is worth a hundredfold that innocence which is ignorance — and so always a source of spiritual danger — which it supplants.

And the first real Spring sunshine revives

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our pagan desires, all our reprehensible yearnings — reprehensible, that is, from the point of view of the parish beadle and the opinion of those gathered around the parish pump. We long to get away, right away, from all the drabness of our surroundings, to taste anew the joy of Youth — not the joy which youthful people know, but the joy which elderly people know should be theirs — if Youth but realized its blessings! As our winter clothes, which looked quite neat and tidy in the sunless months, now look worn and musty, so our heart seems musty too—with that mustiness which belongs to a too long period of let's-pretend-to-be-what-inwardly-we-are-convincing-we-are-not. In the Spring I want to burn my boats behind me; throw my cap over the nearest windmill, and escape — I know not exactly where, but far away from all the too familiar scenes and people which daily encompass me. I yearn for fresh surroundings, unknown faces; to be stirred by that spirit of adventure which sets forth against all advice towards some dream-goal, the realizable hope of which, even in our own hearts, carries no conviction. In our heart of hearts so many of us are tramps. That we don't "tramp" is because we haven't, as a rule, the necessary

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courage. And what holds us back? Public Opinion, as symbolized in our friends and relatives, for one thing; the inner fear that, once having broken away from our moorings, we shall regret our lost anchorage; even such trivial things as some social engagement which we must keep next week; the friend who is coming to stay with us next month; even such important things as the "boss" who gives us our job; the protestation of our womenfolk, who can never realize that in the hearts of men the domestic hearth may not be, at all times, the only thing in life that matters; our children, who will ask us leading questions later on, and our near relations who will explain our "questionable conduct" to them by grossly misleading answers. In fact, a thousand and one major and minor details of our daily lives — details which we can rarely convince ourselves will not matter so much in a hundred years as they seem to matter now. Briefly, we are slaves to our habits and to our fears; yet the fact that we do live in slavery, more or less, does not prevent us from often hating our bonds, and despising ourselves for being held by them in thraldom.

Life is a puzzling experience, not the least of its mystery being the realization that, what-

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ever we may do, we will regret. Ideals seem so often to be merely banners by which disillusion dazzles our eyes. The virtuous and conventional life seems to be too conventional to be really virtuous; rather like trying to live quietly in a suburban drawing-room with a monkey trying to get out. And the unconventional life is too much like living alone surrounded by nothing except monkeys — no moment's peace from one day to another. So most of us make a kind of forced compromise with convention. But if there be anything more unsatisfactory than a forced compromise, I should like to know what it is.

I don't suppose we shall ever experience real happiness until we live a second life — beginning with the knowledge we have gained in this. And the first touch of real Spring sunshine makes us yearn to live that second life — here and now. It is the season of revolutionary ideas. It is the season when both the joy of working to live and of living to work pales beside the desire to live simply to enjoy, and enjoying thus — to live. It is the season when good moral intentions seem nearer to hell than sheerer physical *joie de vivre*. It is the season when to stand on a hill-top is to be nearer heaven than fulfilling

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all the Ten Commandments in the market-place. It is the season when even God seems to enjoy Himself and laugh. Those who die in the Spring have surely a justifiable grudge against their destiny. Sad Spring often is — but with the sadness which comes from realizing that we have wasted far too many, and that they will never come again. We shall probably waste this one too. That is our way. Outsiders may not perhaps perceive any change in our mental outlook, but inwardly we shall all be sending them, and all they represent, to the devil. Our heart will be in the sunshine — we will be pagans utterly and deliriously, careless of anything but the sheer joy of being alive. Our bodies, on the other hand, may be decked in a frock-coat and crowned by a top-hat. But don't rely on spiritual sedateness from anybody when the orchards are gay with blossom and lambs are chasing each other across the fields.

To quote from one of the poems of Bliss Carman:—

Make me over Mother April,
When the sap begins to stir!
Make me man or make me woman,
Make me oaf, or ape, or human,
 Cup of flower or cone of fir;
Make me anything but neuter
 When the sap begins to stir!

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On Drivelling

AMONG the minor tortures of the Every-day, I know none more poignant than the one which insists upon two or more people keeping up a polite flow of meaningless conversation because they happen to find themselves enclosed in the same restricted space for a period of time. Most of us know far too many people, very few of whom we ever want to see again — or rather, very few of whom we should care two straws if they set sail for the farthest end of the Earth to-morrow. Among the smaller battles of my life is the one I wage against getting to know the people who immediately surround me. If only one could be invisible to mere acquaintances, and materialize only in the vision of our real friends! Acquaintances are sometimes delightful, if you pick them up en route or they happen to live not nearer than fifty miles from your own habitation; but the people who happen to know you because they live in the same street, or in the same village, or attend the same church — and because they

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live near you, get to know all about you — these people rank high in the list of life's daily annoyances. Apart from surreptitiously packing up your trunks and fleeing elsewhere in the dead of night, you cannot escape them: and, alas! wherever you may go, their prototypes are already living there all around you, ready to say "good morning" to you at the first opportunity, inform you of the vagaries of the weather, and sooner or later ask you to lunch, tea or dinner; after which you are in their clutches for just so long as you remain in the vicinity. Of course, if they are charming, interesting, amusing people — the reward is enchanting. But when I write of "acquaintances," I mean those hundreds of people who know you work in an office, or that you can only afford to keep one servant; that you hold eccentric views on religion or politics; but, because you may be useful to add to the babble of polite conversation within four walls which they call their "parties," seek to drag you into the vortex of their own social amenities. You have nothing to say to them; they have nothing to say to you; you simply "know each other" and secretly bore each other exceedingly. But because they know you, and believe they know

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all about you, whatever you say, do, or think, is criticized, until in exasperation at the unsought-for interest which you have aroused in their minds, you retreat in anger behind a mask — the expression of which you know will please them, and the words which issue from it will be of just that platitudinous character by which alone you may live with them in peace and approbation. But is there anything more wearisome than having always to live behind a mask? With your friends you may be natural; with those acquaintances you make on your travels away from home, you may utter the truth as you realize it. The former understand you and love you as much for the qualities you lack as for the virtues you possess; the latter carry their own opinions of you so far away that you feel as indifferent to their criticism as if they were so many enemies or admirers living in Timbuctoo. But the people you are driven into knowing — not because you like them, but because you run across them so often — these are the people who interest you seldom, and really bore you at all times. They are like the average “relation,” who only perceives the less admirable side of your character to hoard it up against the eventuality of your ever-pre-

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suming virtue. Unlike the average relation, however, mere acquaintances criticize you behind your back; whereas relatives thoroughly enjoy being rude to each other face to face — that being the prerogative of a blood-tie.

Oh, if only you might keep acquaintances on that pleasant friendly level on which you keep shopkeepers and those with whom you are brought into contact merely by way of life's daily business! But you can't. The descent from being an apparently amiable stranger into a most unamiable intimate bore, is direct. It starts with a casual introduction. It continues with a pleasantly expressed "good morning"; when you next meet them, your "good morning" is perhaps so pleasant that, at the next encounter they ask you to lunch, or you are expected "to call"; or they send you tickets for some dull concert. The end is that they eventually commandeer many hours of your life, so that you are forced to take their propinquity into consideration even when spending the day in bed. Should you "drop" them you turn them into enemies; but even though you may deluge them with that flow of personal gossip, punctuated by conventional inanities on things in general, called "small talk," you never turn

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them into real friends. There is no link between you except the link of a common environment and the fact that you know each other's faces and a good deal of each other's purely superficial life. It is the price we all have to pay for living in herds. I sometimes wonder if in Heaven we shall suddenly be accosted by people claiming acquaintance with us because they happened to have died next door. It will be tiresome if they do. For then, we shall have immediately to talk about the celestial weather or the angel choir, and if Mrs. Smith, who caused so great a scandal in Acacia Road by running off with Mrs. Brown's husband, is there or in that other place to which the whole of Acacia Road condemned her when she eloped. The necessity of having for the sake of politeness and the desire to leave a "decent impression," to go on talking long after we have exhausted all we cared to say — talking to people to whom we have nothing to tell, nor from whom we have anything very much to learn — makes social life sometimes such an unutterably dull state that existence on a desert island, with just one, or at most two, real intimates, appears more like Heaven than any promise of belonging to the mighty cohorts of the Blessed.

It always secretly amuses me when I hear

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people declare that, for the sake of peace and quietness, they are determined to go and live in the depths of the country. From the point of view of sheer noise, the country is of course a haven of repose. But there is an even greater noise, though it does not deafen us maybe — and that is the “noise” which people make when they live in close proximity to each other and know each other too well. Vultures leave the bones of their victims comparatively “meaty” in comparison with what is left in the way of “privacy” after country society has finished picking a stranger in their midst to pieces. You say: “Well, what does it matter what people think of you?” It is quite true in theory. But in practice it is of great importance. People, although you may be perfectly indifferent to them personally, can annoy you in a million subtle ways. Though all you may ask of the world is the opportunity to live out your own life in your own way, it takes almost a lifetime of experience before you realize that you have demanded the well-nigh impossible. Independence of thought, of action, is a direct challenge to the world — a subtle kind of declaration that the rest of the world is all wrong. So the world tries to justify itself in its own eyes by adding

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to your discomfiture — and uncomfortable it always manages to make you, unless you have the moral, spiritual and social hide of a rhinoceros.

In England, London is perhaps the only place in which a man and woman may live independently and at peace. What noise there is, is the noise of traffic, of all those hundred and one mysterious sounds which make up the rumbling symphony of a big city. But though your sense of hearing may be disturbed thereby, your mind can live freely nevertheless, your personality develop in peace. In London you are not hurled into the arms of your next-door neighbour simply because he happens to live next door. Should you desire to know him, it is either through your own wish or by your own fault. London is so large that you need only know the people with whom you especially desire to be friendly. In London you may cut down your acquaintanceship with the people you don't care about particularly to an enchanting minimum. The fact that you, yourself, happen to live in Chelsea, and the acquaintance who doesn't interest you lives in Balham, obviates any necessity for being "charming" to him beyond the ten minutes of some chance meeting — a

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period of time in which only the utter boor cannot give of his most gushing form of amiability. The acquaintance will take leave of you believing that, granted the chance to live in closer proximity, you might both become intimate. As a consequence, he looks upon you favourably. It is impossible to keep up that polite fetish when you happen to live in Little Puddleton and the "bore" lives in Greater Puddleton — only three miles away. In the country you are forced to guard your privacy with "white lies" — all of which can quite easily be found out. In London you can live "lost" to all except those few who know you and love you, whom you know and love so greatly in return. Thus you may follow up the bent of your character without having always to explain your motives to people who can't understand them, or, if that be impossible — at least pretend they don't. Briefly, in London you can lead your own life, or as much of your own life as it is possible to lead otherwise than alone on a desert island. In the country, you have, for the sake of peace and quietness, to lead the life led by other people — a life sanctified by all the tin-pot social deities of the place. In London you can live comparatively unknown and so unwatched. In

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the country you must perforce live in the public view and are patronized according to the satisfaction felt for your life and your ideas by the Lord of the Manor House, or whoever may be the nearest approach to God Almighty in the district. In London people are “dropped,” taken up again, and “dropped” once more so rapidly that there is hardly time or opportunity to show rancour. Besides, other people, perhaps more delightful, are ready to receive you and be by you received. In the country, to be “dropped” is to be also ostracised: there only remains for your entertainment the dull amenities of the golf club, the annual “bun fight” in the rectory garden, and the society of the local practitioner and lawyer — who can’t afford to bow too humbly to the decrees of social benediction or expulsion.

No, the only way in which it is possible to find happiness in the country is to have attained to that philosophy which finds cows, sheep, in fact all animal life, so much more companionable than the average human being; to appreciate the beauty and variety of Nature so intensely that the sight of anyone more elegant than a rustic is as a blot upon the landscape: to live among your own thoughts, your own books,

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visited only by those few real friends whom to be with is as a sudden deepening of the soul, a realization of all that is best in your nature — a reflection of your inner self; a sharing of all those hidden dreams which haunt you in the silences of life, and sing, as it were, a kind of love-song in the midst of those prosaic commonplace daily acts which the empty babble of human tongues accompany so effectively.

For my own part, I am in the midst of an experiment — an experiment by which I hope eventually to find peace, and to recover what seemed at one time to be my lost *joie de vivre*. I am striving to prune my life of its unessentials, —the unessentials of mere outward show, the unessentials of mere hollow friendships. So much money is spent on things which are only for the gratification or envy of other people, that most of us have little or nothing left over to do the things we really yearn to do, see the places we have always longed to see, travel, amuse ourselves, enjoy life as it should be enjoyed. So many of us waste the precious hours of life twaddling to or propitiating people who have no real interest in us, as we have no real interest in them. I have left the throng of mere acquaintances fifty miles behind me, and am try-

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ing to live my life among people whose philosophy I understand, undisturbed by the crowd who neither share my interests nor have the very least desire even to know what they are. I face whole days now in which my loudest song of thanksgiving is that, so far as I can know, nobody is likely to disturb me — except those people whose advent is as an additional joy to the Every-day. Because I have politely fled from the “hosts of Mrs. Browns,” I can live more simply, more economically and infinitely happier. I never feel lonely, — or rather, not half so lonely as when I am secreted with “Mrs. Brown” and her friends, talking over “other people” or airing superficial opinions concerning new novels, new plays; hunting for one conversational topic after another, with one mental eye on the conventions of polite conversation, and one actual eye on the clock.

So far my experiment has been an immense success.

But I am beginning to realize that I shall have to fight for my happiness — as we always have to do, sooner or later. Already scarcely a week passes but I receive a letter from this metaphorical “Mrs. Brown,” informing me that a “dear friend” of hers, Miss Blankington,

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has come to live "quite near me," and will I be sure to "call" upon her, as she, Mrs. Brown, is certain we shall both find "heaps of things in common." It will take me all my time to avoid meeting "Miss Blankington," and I shall probably offend her if I do; but better far refuse to know people than know them only to ignore them later on. You can't be too particular — I don't mean in any "snobbish" sense, of course — regarding the acquaintances you make within a radius of twenty-one miles. "Miss Blankington" may possibly be quite a delightful woman, but in knowing her I shall have to know, or rather I shall get to know, most of her "set." That is inevitable. I shall receive invitations to lunch, or dinner; to play bridge, golf, tennis, even to be a guest at that truly appalling form of country entertainment — a "garden party." Eventually the last state will be even worse than the first one. So I will be adamant. I will develop "incipient insanity" in order to keep Miss Blankington and her "set" from my doors. I will have none of them. I will, indeed, make my own "set," and in it shall be just those people with whom I can be completely natural, neither pretending to be what I am not, nor ashamed

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to acknowledge what I am. The world is so wide; it promises so much adventure; life is so fleeting and so wonderful, that I WILL NOT be hampered in my movements nor in my thoughts, by people who are as a halter around the neck of personal freedom. All men are my brothers, and those among them to whom I am drawn irresistibly will actually be my "brothers" — we will talk, and laugh, and live together in understanding, and I will seek them wheresoever they may be, and clasp their hands in friendship, whosoever they are. After all, we can choose our friends — our acquaintances are chosen for us, unless we are extremely careful, on such unstable grounds as propinquity, or because they know some one who knows us, or because they met us at Mrs. Brown's At Home, or because — oh, because of anything which contains no particular reason for a renewal of convivialities. Mere acquaintances at all times add very little to the entertainment of life — when you come to think about them; and the devastating boredom they inflict — requires no thought at all. It is there — staring at us among our morning letters, when we go out, when we return — at nearly every moment of our lives, and most of all when we least want

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to find it. But it is our own fault after all. We know too many people, and restrict our choice too much to one special "set," to one particular type, to one recognized class. No wonder so many people are secretly bored. They merit no deeper spiritual state.

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Night-before Courage

TO dare and do — or to renounce and pretend happiness in resignation . . . that is a battle which so many of us have to wage all through life, a problem which repeats itself from adolescence to the grave. Always we are met by that question: Shall I risk all and hope for success, or shall I risk nothing and be certain at least of a drab-coloured peace of mind? Renunciation is at all times such a desolate kind of victory, and yet even a desolate kind of victory, we think, is better than an irretrievable defeat. The luckier kind of people have either their desires so subdued by their conscience that there is no life in them at all, or are those who have strong desires and practically no conscience worth considering. But, alas! the majority of us have only a semi-developed conscience — just enough, in fact, to make our wishes often feel actively uncomfortable, and not enough to bury them decently and in order. We are continually in the throes of some inner conflict, and, except when we are asleep, there seems no period of reprieve. “Thou-ought-not” is always the un-

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invited "skeleton" at our parties of desire. We have only to yearn madly to do something, for this "skeleton" to rattle his dry bones. Of course, some people can seize the skeleton and thrust him inside the family cupboard where other skeletons are kept — thrust him in and lock the door, throwing the key out of the nearest window. But these are the purely selfish people, born with a conscience which doesn't show signs of life except within the shadow of death — a moment when even the most sluggish endeavours to sprout angel's wings and cry, "God, forgive me, for I know not what I did." The majority among us are not built on those straight and rigid lines. We rarely leap before we look, and afterwards demand pardon for our impetuosity. Metaphorically speaking, we spend our time gaily galloping towards the hedge, looking over it, taking fright, and galloping back again in a panic; running forward once more — eventually falling off into the mud on this side, cursing ourselves for our timidity, yet doing the selfsame thing again the next time, and over again once more. As "examples" we are at all times unsatisfactory, and, whether as pseudo-victors or actual victims, are ourselves equally unsatisfied.

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We have no definite line of conduct; or, if we have, it is a zigzag line — first going this way, then that. We are always, as it were, seeing a “goal” — making for it, hesitating half-way, and turning our back on it, grumbling at that lack of initial impetus which might have carried us to our journey’s end in spite of ourselves. So in our Garden of Happiness we flounder about — half-suspecting that it should not be a “garden” at all, but a kind of bleak wilderness, in the middle of which we are on our knees thanking some mysterious deity that we did not do what other men might have done. We do not resist temptation so much as play with it; and that is the most unhappy way of dealing with it. The fact is, our spiritual vision changes — not only with the periods of our life, but during the briefer period of the daily twenty-four hours. What we yearn to do at midnight we thank heaven we resisted at midday. On the other hand, what we resisted at midday we call ourselves “fools” for resisting after supper. Even the sun affects us. We are influenced by so many things which, according to the probity which we profess, ought not to have the least effect upon us. We are creatures of impulse — and that impulse is guided by the purest chance. We may

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escape or we may be captured — but both our escape and our capture consist, in nine cases out of ten, of sheer good luck or bad. Given the time, and the place, *and the mood* — and I would not go bail for any saint in Christendom. The only chance most of us have to be saved from ourselves is to shut ourselves away within four thick walls and keep our eye fixed on the stars, in dread that our gaze may wander somewhere else. Which fact ought to make people very gentle and kind to one another. But it doesn't! *Aren't* we a strange mixture of good intentions and most reprehensible activities?

Sometimes I think that the happiest of us all is he who is little but a human "turnip" — fat, solid, and tasteless. These people don't, of course, know that they are happy — because they don't usually know what happiness is. To eat, drink, sleep, and to have time to worship the conventions, is all they ask of life, and life punishes their modesty by giving them all these things — and nothing else. Rightly or wrongly, we have to give of ourselves, and give again and again, if we wish to get anything real out of life. We have to pay the price of every happiness we receive — and sometimes the payment seems excessive. But what matter? A little

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island of sheer bliss is worth an ocean of tears. Even if that island sinks like Atlantis of old to the bottom of the sea, its memory is as the memory of Elysium, and a happy memory is something of which no one can rob us, though we live to the age of Methuselah. The true growth of the soul is through weeping, and there is no laughter so fraught with relief as the laughter which follows tears. We can never be truly happy until we have truly suffered, a fact which makes the smiles of age more wonderful than all the careless joyfulness of youth.

Happiness, like liberty, has to be earned to be fully enjoyed. It may not be that careless, rollicking emotion which young people know, but, though its outward expression may be more subdued, its significance is deeper — its preciousness infinitely more to be valued. But to find happiness one has to dare, as well as endure. It is the reward life gives us for our courage and our endurance; and though that reward often seems tardy in its coming, I do believe that it eventually comes to all of us at last — to all of us who have voluntarily paid the price.

The reason why so many people are unhappy all their lives is just because they have not developed this courage, because they have mis-

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taken a discontented resignation for a divine afflatus. Towards the ultimate realization of all those things upon which their hearts have centred, they have deliberately stopped at Halfway House. So they do not even achieve the veritable contentment of mind of those who have never started, nor find that inner happiness, that precious truth, which those discover who carve out their destiny towards some definite appointed end and joyfully take the consequences of their acts. So they live in inner discontent, grumbling at the colourlessness of their fate, and die, not so much in the hope of a glorious resurrection or philosophically content to leave Life after Death where it should be left — until after death, as puzzled, wondering why exactly they were ever born at all, and why Life has meant in their case so very little. Their courage has been the courage of the night before; their cowardice of to-day.

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Anchorage

UNTIL the spirit has found an anchorage, it is impossible to build up one's life round that inner happiness which perhaps is the only permanent happiness any of us ever know. One of the reasons why, in this modern world of greater universal comfort, of more definite enlightenment, there seems so little real happiness in most people's lives is because so many of the "anchors" to which men once secured their hopes seem to have left their moorings, allowing them to drift hopelessly at sea on a metaphorical Atlantic liner of luxurious appointments. Unfortunately, you cannot deliberately set forth to discover that glorious faith around which you may build up the temple of your dreams. It is useless to tell people that they will find comfort in religion, or in the succouring of less fortunate men, or in science, or in learning, or even in so-called social amusements. They may; on the other hand, they may not. It takes many, many years of a man's life before he becomes a philosopher, and even then his philosophy may be

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nothing more than that dreary state of the soul which in despair has resigned itself to laughing at everything. We all want to climb; our misery is that so many of us find nothing worth climbing after. But don't despise us; especially do not deride. We are not happy. We are not so happy as the man who, in his ignorance, will readily believe anything. We all yearn to believe in something, in some one, in some big magnificent "essential." That so many of us throw ourselves deliberately into the vortex of worldly pleasures is often a sign that the "soul" has lost its anchorage and is drifting anywhere — anywhere, so long as it is drugged into forgetfulness. And this is what so many people are seeking — drugs; not the actual drug, but some ephemeral joy which will hide from them the fact that their own lives and the lives of all men seem to possess so little *raison d'être*. Their wagon is hitched on to no resplendent star. The modern world is full of the spiritually "homeless." Most of us know just sufficient to make us lonely and desolate, and have not enough real knowledge to lend security to our hope. We live, as it were, in that transition stage between a blind faith discarded and the glimmer of a possible scientific enlightenment — and a period of transition, like a

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period of suspense, is the most unhappy state of all.

The War gave the world something big to live and to die for. It was caused by all that is worst in the human world, but its tragedy brought forth, nevertheless, all that is best in it. It bound humanity together in the one common link of suffering and loss. We fought, we gave unselfishly; we offered ourselves in sacrifice, not only that the War might be won, but, more especially, that peace might realize so many of those dreams of a "heaven upon earth," that Millennium which would more than atone for all the misery and beastliness of the most terrible war the world has ever known. But alas! the peace has disappointed us, proved the greatest illusion of all. The "soul" of men seemed at one time to see daylight, but the vision has been obscured. We are being led back once more into those old "ruts" which lead eventually to more war, more unnecessary suffering, more unutterable woe. And the average man is powerless. But the world is not without hope. The world after all has seen a "vision," and the memory of it will one day provide the necessary spiritual strength by which its beauty may be realized. The tragedy is that all those many millions who

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still "remember" find themselves powerless to realize their aspirations. They possess no "anchorage," other than the memory of the horror and devastation that is past. Humanity needs a new "battle cry," a new inspiration. The spirit of men is alive to all that is best in religion and politics, but the "spirit" is adrift, awaiting a leader, seeking a central authority around which it can build up the realization of its dream of a new and finer civilization. There is comfort to be drawn even from the fact of the present world unrest. It may seem revolutionary, even anarchical, but its hidden causes spring from a divine discontent, as all but the prejudiced, the stagnant and the selfish must perceive. Men are crying out for a new statement of values, the old ones having long since proved themselves false and illusory. Everywhere in the world humanity is trying to find an outlet for that spiritual emancipation by which it hopes to found a new and better ordering of human life. In music, in art, in literature, there is direct evidence that the human "soul" is breaking through the fetters of those dead-and-gone traditions which for too long have encompassed it — those traditions which long since have outlived their period of usefulness.

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The Dullness of “Doing it Now”

I KNOW a man. He is a worthy man, of little imagination, and less human sympathy. But he is all I should like to be, yet I am much happier by being different. His life is as clockwork in its regularity. If his spirit wavers, he reads texts — then on he goes renewed in valiantness and, let us hope, rejoicing. In his bedroom, immediately facing him, so that the first thing his opening eyes rest upon may inspire the mind which lies behind them, he has hung the adage: “Do it Now.” It is printed in big scarlet letters on a white ground, and, as if that were not decorative enough, the artist has painted tiny bunches of primroses in each corner — most inappropriate, it seems to me, since the “primrose path” generally runs in the opposite direction to practical advice. But he really and truly does try to live up to it, which is more than the usual moral adage can hope for. For example, it makes him spring out of bed the moment his alarm clock goes off. It follows him to the breakfast table, where it makes him eat his meal

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without first glancing through the morning newspaper to see if yet another husband has been accused of poisoning his wife. (Wives do not seem to be very popular at the moment, do they?) It prevents him from having a "first pipe" after his breakfast is ended. It makes him catch his train every morning without having to run for it. It keeps him at business long after his fellow-workers have seized their hats and departed homewards, or so we hope! It sends him to bed every night at half-past ten, except on Saturday, when he "frisks" until eleven. In fact, it is worth about a thousand a year to him. But what a life!

I, too, have my own pet adage, though I do not hang it opposite my bed, for the simple reason that I find a greater spiritual comfort in a cup of tea. I, too, follow it implicitly, except when a qualm of conscience sends me fleeing along the Right Road for just about ten minutes. It is this: "If it's nice, do it now. If it's not, do it to-morrow: who knows but you may die to-day!" What a sybaritic philosophy, you declare, in that "shocked manner" which a clergyman's wife feels she must assume when she hears "damn!" It is. All my friends condemn it. And so do I. It costs me, roughly

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speaking, five hundred a year. But I do enjoy myself, thank you very much!

I wonder why all the nasty things have to be done now, while you are held up as an "horful" example if you put off doing the nice things until to-morrow? Experience has taught me that one renunciation inevitably leads to another, until at last the only definite possessions your life contains are the things you have voluntarily gone without. Always to do the thing you should do at the very moment when you should do them, seems to lead people at last towards a kind of emotional atrophy; at least, I must judge so from my knowledge of the few I know who, applying Duty relentlessly to the minor details of the Everyday, see all life at last, not as one Big Purpose, but as a thousand-and-one "important" insignificances beyond which their vision grows dim. I speak in metaphor, of course, when I complain that there are far too many people who, when you impulsively suggest to them a visit to a theatre on Thursday afternoon, assure you that nothing would please them more, only "they always pour out dear John's tea for him on that day, otherwise —" At last, the self-invited tyranny of trivial duties becomes the one main factor in their lives.

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Never to do the “wrong thing” occasionally usually ends by doing the “right thing” in the wrong way.

And yet, how many people there are who plan out their lives as if life were a jig-saw puzzle, each daily duty forced to dovetail into the next day’s efforts. Like a jig-saw puzzle, too, their lives make a very well-coloured picture. But then, the most uninteresting moment of a jig-saw puzzle comes immediately you have discovered the proper resting-place of the very last piece. True, you are faced by a complete design, but the result doesn’t seem at all commensurate with the labour you went through in making it. The “fun” of a jig-saw puzzle lies in trying to do it, the bits which we think are going to fit into other bits, and don’t: the joy of at last finding two pieces which really belong to one another, over which there is more rejoicing far, than when the whole thing is completed. And it seems to me, that this, too, is half the thrill of life. To do what you shouldn’t do occasionally makes the moment when you have done what you ought to do seem so wonderful. But “Do it now” always refers to the things you should do but don’t want to, and in those who follow the adage relentlessly — well, haven’t you noticed

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that their hearts hold no particle of joy, either for themselves or for others? It is their “reward”; it is also their punishment.

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Old Friends for New

FULLY conscious that I may incur the displeasure of all those for whom the trite remark is on all occasions the most apt — I must confess that a New Friendship is a very delightful experience. “New brooms always sweep the cleanest,” I hear Old Friends remark, since Old Friends always seem to grudge us our latest fancies. They say it in a disparaging sense, though why they do so I can never understand — the remark seems such a splendid advocacy for new brooms! Anyway, New Friends are like new brooms in this respect — they do seem to sweep away a whole heap of accumulated boredom. Old Friends are at all times the more precious, but their society, though restful, is never thrilling exactly. They fit in as it were, with our bedroom moods. But one doesn’t always want to sit up in one’s bedroom; one flees there to be at rest, as a refuge from the madding throng. That, however, is not written in disparagement of bedrooms, nor of Old Friends. On the contrary, I would, personally,

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far rather keep the solitude of my bedroom intact and “let” my drawing-room, than share my bedroom with another and turn my drawing-room into my own private study. But — and I still write metaphorically — one does not dress up, put on one’s jewellery, polish up one’s wit, and generally deck oneself out to create a fine impression, merely to sit in one’s bedroom, or to entertain those whom long familiarity has given the key to our innermost sanctum. Upstairs we discard our outer glory, put on a dressing-gown and find peace. And if we must share these blessed moments of respite, we share them with Old Friends. They form part and parcel of our reposeful mood. All the same, the keen delight of repose soon palls — unless, of course, one happens to be extremely old, or extremely “edgy.” We want, sooner or later, to descend in our full gala attire, prepared to “sparkle” before an audience. But we don’t see our Old Friends among this audience. We keep them for those moments when merely to get away from the crowd is at once a holiday, a respite and a refuge. They are precious — these Old Friends of ours — but they don’t make the blood course faster through the veins; they don’t re-animate the bored and vacant mind; they don’t, as it were,

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provide the "champagne" of existence,—except occasionally and in a purely material sense during those gaily-sad festivities known as "anniversaries"—so beloved by Old Friends. They are as a long drink of good old-fashioned tea after a surfeiting of those more sparkling beverages which may cheer, but can always be relied upon to inebriate. One seeks out one's Old Friends when one is tired, or in trouble; when one has become sick of mere pretence, bored by the effort to hold up our most ingratiating mask before the world; weary of pretending to be younger than we are, or happier than we make believe. We look upon them rather as we look upon God—thankful from the bottom of our heart that they are THERE, but not particularly thrilled thereby unless our vitality is at a low ebb, or when we need encouragement and additional hope, comfort, and some assuagement from the pin-pricks of the trivial. Old Friends are as an ever-blessed refuge in times of trouble; they are, as it were, the members of that home-circle we make for ourselves through life; but they do not thrill us as the promise of novelty thrills us; they do not encourage us to be what we yearn to be, so much as soothe the bitter realization of our own shortcomings.

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They belong to our fireside moods; but we do not want to sit by the fireside ALL the time — there are too many periods in life when there is nothing left for us to do, when we must perchance sit quietly in some restful backwater, watching not unhappily, those of more youthful vigour pass us by.

True, there are times when Old Friends seem less preferable than absolute strangers. The moments, for example, when they show you scant sympathy in your "very latest rave." Old Friends never seem able to understand our newborn passions. "Speedy friendships," they inform us covertly, "soon run themselves out of breath!" We hate them for the very probable truth underlying that remark. But then a "rave" always looks like a permanent passion, until we have known it so intimately that we have ceased to rave about it. Not that our disappointment outweighs the delight of our past desires to sympathize with the one which now fills our hearts. That is why we so often turn temporarily towards New Friends to find in their ignorance of our failures a very desirable consolation. Old Friends do not flatter us, they know us for the fallible human beings that we are. But a little flattery, especially when we are

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uncertain of ourselves and of our own motives, is sometimes as valuable as downright plain speaking. New Friends will always judge us by our best side, because they are unacquainted with our worst. That is why we shine so much more brilliantly in their company. And in shining thus brilliantly we return home immensely pleased with ourselves. We believe that we have been appreciated; we feel that at last we have been understood. Our New Friends fill us with great enthusiasm. We believe that we have found "the ideal companion" at last. We haven't really, of course; but we HAVE found a new audience—and a new audience can often be mistaken for the finest companion in the world.

Yet, there comes to us, sooner or later, a mood when we don't want an audience of any kind; when we yearn for the curtain to fall, hiding us from the sight of the multitude, however appreciative they may be of our merits. They are the moods when we just want to slink away out of sight, and be simple and natural; to be just what we are — owning it in all humility. Then it is that we seek the society of Old Friends and turn to God. And our Old Friends, because they are our old friends, will be there to welcome us. We shall not regard each other as excep-

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tional characters to be admired and over-praised, but the memory of old associations will knit us together in an unbreakable tie. There is no link so binding as the link of remembrance. Yesterday we may, perhaps, have sought happiness each in a different way; but the memory of the day-before-yesterday, and the day before that, will bring us together To-day and, side by side, we shall bravely face the unknown To-morrow. As we enter the gathering obscurity of old age we shall enter it hand in hand. Together we shall be able to live over again our lives in retrospect, recollecting its happy moments, laughing over its past humours, and forgetting all those things which are painful to remember. We shall not need to hide anything, since most things are already known, and age and experience have made us understand each other's failings. New Friends are, as it were, the tentative "feelers" which the lonely heart sends out in its search for the Perfect Friend. But rarely these feelers secure anything more permanent than a passing exchange of confidence, followed by growing estrangement and a bored "Good-bye." They quickened the senses for a while; they added alertness to the mind. But they pass — like ships in the night. Happily, those Old

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Friends, who never stirred our imagination, who only shared, as it were, the most prosaic moments of our lives, remain behind to bring us comfort at long last. For the mind grows stale at length, bored and weary of its search for the romantic unattainable. But the heart, as it grows older, turns more and more towards those who have shared with it the experience of long ago. It is satisfied by a very undemonstrative affection at last — none the less steadfast, however, because it is undemonstrative. It is content to be loved — especially to be loved. And our Old Friends love us in spite of what we are, in spite of what we have been. They are a part of our lives, as we are part of theirs. We rely upon each other when the shadows lengthen and life has become as a story which is already told. Without this Old Friendship — so disillusioned, yet still so strong — we should be stranded indeed. It may only be a very prosaic affection to outward view, but its roots are founded on ineradicable memories of the years that are dead. And, after all, even life itself is for the most part a prose narrative, isn't it? It is only very occasionally that we hear a few notes of that "melody" — that song of might-have-been which haunts the inner silence of our "souls."

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The Right to be Loved

SO many people put in a claim for affection, as if it belonged to them as a right — like the air they breathe. Because they are parents; because they are children; because they are married; because they happen to live next door — they expect to be loved without effort and without question. But affection is a very ephemeral possession. Love is only a reflection of ourselves. If we give none, then none is ever returned to us. And to be loved is something very much more than, metaphorically, to sit on a sofa and look pretty. Of course, you may get a certain kind of attention even if that is all the effort you make to obtain it; the kind of attention which the pantry boy gives to the new kitchenmaid after he has discovered that she powders her nose. But the love which is really worth having is the reward of something so much more personal than a becoming blouse and silkstockinged legs as far as anyone can see! It is a perpetual effort, a never-ending proof of lovable-

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ness. You can no more expect to be loved without an effort than you can hope to escape the income tax authorities by changing your address. The people who cry aloud that they are "lonely" are, for the most part, the people who are terrified at being alone. The really lonely people seldom "make a song" of their loneliness; they just show it by trying to make other people less lonely. I sometimes think that the reason why churches are generally so full of women is not entirely because women are more emotionally inclined, more mystical, more in touch, as it were, with the angels than men, but simply because women, as a rule, are much lonelier individually. They have not the opportunity for indulgence in those fleeting joys which can get a man through a lonely time more successfully than drugs, and are more tangible in their immediate satisfaction than listening to a sermon. When a man's work is done, that man is to all intents and purposes *free*. A woman is very rarely free. When she has thrown aside the chains of work, supposing she does work, she is still bound by the chains of convention. She can only enjoy herself under sanctified chaperonage. It is her misfortune that her minor indiscretions are forgiven her by the world with as much diffi-

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culty as her major sins; and for this she must blame other women.

I am, of course, not referring to sexual love when I say that we get from the world just as much affection as we give it. We may not always get it from the people to whom we give our devotion, but it returns to us from other directions; so that what we lose on the swings we certainly make up for on the roundabouts. Yet this fact few people seem able to realize. In love, they always want, as it were, to put in sixpence and draw six pennies out, if they can't extract a shilling. Their expectation is human, I suppose, but it is very seldom realized. The whole art of love is to know when to subdue its proofs. You can quite easily prove your affection too often and exhibit it too long. Love is a passion, but no passion really demands a cooler judgment. It is just as true to say that love inspires love as to say that love can also kill it. We are, even the oldest of us, but children, and, although we may cry out for sweets, if we are allowed the run of a sweet shop, our liberty invariably makes us sick. What we have in abundance we very soon take for granted, and this applies to love as well as to possessions. The boundary line between being an idol and a door-

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mat is very easily passed. And though an idol may quite easily become a door-mat, who ever heard of a door-mat being resuscitated as an idol? That is why most of the men and women who cry aloud that they are lonely and misunderstood are generally those who loved too little or loved too long. The only difference between them is that one obtains scant sympathy and the other too much pity. But for both of them life leads straight across a bleak and lonely desert. For, say what you will in praise of work and money, influence, power, and social position, the only thing which really counts in the long run is the love we give to others, and the love which others give to us. We are all lonely wanderers through life, and love only can cheat us into the illusion that we are not absolutely alone.

And yet, how literally furious some people are when they discover that their world does not appreciate them to the extent which they believe they deserve! They may have shown that world nothing but tyranny, bad temper, envy, hatred, and malice, but the moment they demand proofs of affection and do not get them, they cry out about the ingratitude of men, their utter selfishness, the stupidity of being anything but selfish

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when all unselfishness receives is a turned back just when open arms would be the only thing to make life worth living. There are some people who are kind in a way which makes you desire to hurl a brickbat at them instead of showing gratitude. These are generally the people who are most cynical concerning the ingratitude of man. We are entertained lavishly by certain folk; but do we feel grateful to them? — do we need to feel gratitude? Certainly not! They have entertained us not from any altruistic motives, but simply because we helped somewhat to make their entertainments a success. There has been no sacrifice on either side. And kindness without a certain sacrifice is something which it is only reasonable to forget the next day. For without a certain sacrifice we never find real affection or love. The man who by some small act of unselfishness on his part has added a little to our happiness is dearer to us than all those people who have bombarded us with invitations or, to descend again to metaphor, given us out of their abundance a mother-o'-pearl collar stud on our birthday. And, thank God, love and affection are the two great gifts which no money can buy. Some people try to buy them, and are bitterly disappointed when, in sending in their account,

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they find they are only faced with a bad debt. For love has no money equivalent. It is the only thing which is cheap as well as rare.

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On Getting Back Home Again

ONE of the great benefits of a holiday is that it makes you appreciate your own home when you get back to it. It is very nice to "get away," but it is equally nice to get back again. One's own little corner of this great big world — well, it may indeed be only a "corner" but all the same it's the happiest place this side of the Great Divide, isn't it? And it is the happiest place . . . well, simply because it is our very own, and we can live therein more peacefully than in all the gilded palaces we yearn after theoretically, only to become so quickly bored by them, once we find ourselves shut within their portals. Everything seems friendly to us in our own little home. The sofa may be stuffed with horsehair, but at least we know the worst it can offer: we are under no delusion regarding the discomfort which underlies its chintz magnificence. And it seems to know us, too, and is pleasantly familiar, as is the way of familiar things. Then our bedroom, that blessed sanctuary of the lonely, how we really love it in com-

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parison with the one we have just vacated and, probably, had to pay so much to sleep in. In our homes we know where everything is, and, strange though it may read, everything seems to know where we are, too, and to love us for being there! We and our belongings are part and parcel of one whole, and that "whole" is what we call our "home." It is a place where we pretend no longer; a place where we can cast away the mask we are forced to wear in the world; a place wherein we can close our eyes, and live at peace. Of course we pretend to dislike it, as we always pretend to dislike over-familiar things and people; but once separated from it, or them, for a long while, and how a return seems to be like a return to harbour after many days spent on a strange sea. So, as I wrote just now, to get away from "home" is necessary every so often, just to make the return thereto a welcome moment of satisfaction. It is very nice to be able to "spread your wings" from time to time, but to be able to "spread yourself" is just as essential. And the only place wherein you can really "spread yourself" is that little place — may be of four walls only — which is yours to do what you like with,— that sanctuary which is to you the one small space in all the big lonely world on which

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you can plant your feet firmly, proudly, and be, if only for your own edification, the one great big "I AM!"

All the same, I think that a real "home" is the creation of middle-age. A young person's "home" lacks that atmosphere of homeliness which is far more essential than exquisite furniture and fine hangings, and emanates exclusively from the owner. A young person's "home" is often pretty, but it rarely seems at the same time that "haven" which is but another word for home. Young people have not so much need of a refuge as those farther advanced along the road of life. Young people use their homes as a kind of "springing-off" centre, or as a background to their own newly-acquired importance. But middle-aged people don't want to spring-off anywhere; on the contrary, they want to hide themselves in some security; they yearn to have a backwater where they can anchor and be at rest, away from the fast-flowing stream of the outside world. And somehow or other this satisfied yearning creates the atmosphere of their homes. The welcome is warm, like the firelight streaming through the open door of a friend's house at the end of a long journey along a lonely road. Something of a respite from life's battle

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seems to radiate from a real home, so that one has therein a feeling of security, of restfulness, of peace, an anchorage to which one can attach one's own storm-damaged bark. And, strangely enough, the poorer the household the richer it often is in this atmosphere of "home." Servants are home-breakers, in more senses than one. An easy chair, a warm fire, and a welcome, even if it be only the welcome of one's dog, surely a "home" is there! And though the world outside may offer us many joys, much change, adventure, passion and delight, one comes back thankful at last and at length, to that metaphorical easy chair, that warm fire, and that welcome which, whether in a cottage or a palace, is what we mean when we think of "home."

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The Sex-Chains of Women

A MAN'S ambition is, as a rule, to make a fortune; a woman's ambition — whatever camouflage she may set up to hide the longing of her heart — is to find the man. Very, very rarely is a man turned aside from his pursuit of success by love, whereas a woman carries within her heart a desire for love, which may at any moment change the whole tenor of her career. Because of this, women will be forever handicapped in their fight for an independent place in the world's affairs. A man is quite satisfied if he be loved. To be loved leaves him free to continue carving out his niche in the hall of fame. But to love — ah! that may swamp every desire to achieve either fame or fortune. And few women can live in contentment by being loved merely. They must at all times love, give of their heart and soul and body, before they feel that life has given them their greatest happiness, casting for them a glamour over the commonplace round of the everyday. Love to a man is a kind of "extra," and if he cannot obtain

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the real thing, then a counterfeit makes quite a pleasant diversion. But in love, women can never be contented with the spurious article. Only on the bed-rock of a Steadfast Adoration do they feel strong enough and brave enough to face the world and the long years which stretch out before them towards old age. In following her career love is either a woman's greatest enemy or her best friend. She lives forever exposed to the risk of having the temple made by her hands shattered at one blow merely by the insatiable longings of her heart to give of its love unceasingly. A man so often judges his life's success by his banking account. But the banking account of a woman plays only a very subsidiary part in her inner satisfaction. If she has found love — then all else may be taken from her; she may still rise triumphantly over those who pity her for her failure in the world's race. True, for a time she may believe, and make others believe, that in financial freedom she has found her heart's desire. But sooner or later she has to acknowledge that financial freedom has in no way realized her "dreams." True, while she is young, she may be satisfied by admiration and that physical passion which poets disguise so beautifully as "love." But there

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comes a time when to be loved will not satisfy her. She must herself love — or sink into that state of disgruntled loneliness which is the unacknowledged bogey haunting every woman's inner life.

Men can live so much more independently of love than women. Therein lies their strength. Therein is the power given them to carve out their career undisturbed. But a woman always sees her career threatened by love, and her heart is so constituted that she cannot work for herself independently and love at the selfsame time. So her career usually "goes to the wall," and the end of her life, if it be a happy end, finds most of her labour wasted — or perhaps I should not write "wasted" so much as renounced gloriously. So it would seem, indeed, that no woman can ever know more than a semblance of real freedom. She may entertain her men friends at her own private flat — and that seems to spell "independence" for most women! — she may meet men on what she likes to call an equal footing (though there is really no such thing in the association of the sexes as equality!); she may discuss matters which she would scarcely talk over even with other women, and smoke, and gamble, and swear; but she is never really free

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all the same. No one can ever be free whose real happiness comes only through the desire to love and be loved. Worldly success is surely a triumph of supreme egotism; whereas love, at its finest, is a complete negation of the ego, a desire to serve the loved one in all particulars and at all points, the glorious triumph of unselfishness, in which all personal ambitions must, perforce, play a minor rôle. That is why, among all the women who seek to carve out a career for themselves, so few there are whose career outlives their youth! They end either as happy mothers, or happy wives, or happy mistresses — or, maybe, most unhappy “bachelor” middle-aged “kittens.”

So, though love be to the heart a state of slavery, it is in nearly every instance women’s most happy freedom. Outside love — they are the veriest slaves, dependent on a thousand customs, conventions, traditions, instincts, from which they cannot cut themselves adrift to find happiness in that bondless existence so easily to be enjoyed by men. What a man may do may be forgiven him within a year. Other men don’t particularly care, and women can find the means to forget, providing he can offer them compensations in the way of looks, or cleverness, or money, or wit, or admiration of themselves. But

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what a woman does is remembered against her so long as ever she may live. She, too, may be beautiful and intelligent, possess wealth and wit and charm, but other women not only do not forgive her her past trespasses because of these gifts, but they remember because of them. So a woman realizes that in the life she leads opposite the world, there is no such thing for her as "going back and beginning all over again." Only in love can she find some one for whom her "past" is as if it had never been. But the world she knows judges her future by that past, and if there is much she would like to forget in the long ago, the society in which she moves will never allow her to forget it. Thus, even in what she likes to believe is her newly-attained liberty, that freedom is more illusory than real. She may live what she likes to refer to as "her own life," but usually her struggle to live it is not so severe as the struggle she goes through to prevent all the details of that life being found out. Mostly a husband must come to her rescue in the end. There is a great "hushing up," and no one is more utterly thankful if that "hushing up" be successful than the heroine of the affair. I shall believe in the real freedom of women when they can live freely without perpetual camouflage and

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pretence, and wholly and solely within themselves, independently of what the world thinks of them — following the dictates of their own heart and moral convictions to the end, whether that long last be bitter or sweet, or merely “flat” — as are so many last chapters in life.

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Ever-recurrent Doubt

THERE comes, I believe, to each one of us, though many of us own it not, the recurrent moment when we ask ourselves if the life which we are living be the life that is best "worth while"; if our ambition be worthy of the efforts we make to attain it; if, after all, it matters what we do, so long as we are happy —

The worldly hope men set their hearts upon
Turns ashes — or it prospers, and anon,
Like snow upon the desert's dusty face
Lighting a little hour or two — is gone.

In these moments we envy the ignorant man who can live from day to day with no heed for the morrow and its many problems. We yearn to change places with him. Like him, we want to be able to accept, in blind faith, the lot to which we have been called; and, like him, steadfastly believe that all is well with the life hereafter. In a hundred years, we ask ourselves, what will it matter — what, indeed, will anything matter to those who are now living upon this earth? There comes to us at the same time the

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sudden realization that even the mummies in the museum, though it is so hard to believe it, were once men or women as full of life as we are; filled with the selfsame ambitions; haunted by the same doubts; living, as so many of us live, as if life were eternal, and that each conscious moment were not a space of time so precious that to waste it in trivial endeavour is to waste something as valuable as our life's blood! It is not pleasant, this recurrently haunting thought that what we are, that what we do, will in so short a space be as completely obliterated as if we and ours were but the figments of a dream forgotten long ago. It is so hard to realize this, we who are so full of our own small importance, who are so thrilled by the happenings of our little world and the part we are called upon to play in them. It is only occasionally that, as it were, the veil of the present is lifted, and our imagination explores the long future, to realize that, there, men shall look in vain for the well-known footprints which now seem to make so deep an impression on the sands of time.

And when you come to think of it, how much of this precious time we waste in trying to grasp that "little more" which experience shows us only too frequently does not bring us any

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kind of satisfaction commensurate with the pains we take to obtain it. So many of us resemble an aunt of mine, who, fortunate enough to enjoy an unearned income of fifteen hundred a year, gaily spent two thousand, and then, when her income had dwindled to a net thousand pounds per annum, went through a rigid form of what she called economy, and only spent twelve hundred; till at last she had to find satisfaction somehow on an income considerably less than those wages she had at one time paid her cook. After all, when you really and truly come to consider it, happiness — real happiness — is not such a costly affair after all. It is only what we mistake for happiness which runs away with both our income and our energy. But few people are ever satisfied by “enough.” They are always striving after that “little more” which is the will-o’-the-wisp leading us to disaster in the bogs and marshland. Maybe the chief trouble is that very few people realize what constitutes their happiness. They take their happiness “cue” from their next-door neighbour, and often break themselves in an endeavour to reach his standard. They suffer from that inherent desire in most men and women to be mistaken for a tin-pot king or queen, even if only in a very tin-pot

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kingdom. Some will even go to the furthermost limits of sacrifice in order to obtain a semblance of a tin-pot majesty. They will pay a number of people to do for them the simplest duties, and yet wonder why their newly-acquired leisure offers them little else but long hours of boredom which have to be filled in somehow. They will entertain lavishly a number of people whose only interest in them is what they can get for themselves out of the entertainment. Of course, for the time being, it makes the entertainers a centre of attraction, but what is the satisfaction of being "the centre of attraction" if you have to pay the supers a fee to stand around and applaud? No, the trouble is that most people are always trying to find happiness in things outside, not only themselves, but their proper sphere in life; the result being that they never find it anywhere, and the fruitless search has to be paid for in disappointment and tears, just like every other fruitless search, which misses its goal.

Say what you will, too much prosperity is worse for most of us than too much adversity. The "little more," and how much it is; the "lot more," and how it usually carries us out of our depth into deep waters, where the "best in us" drowns ignominiously. It is far rarer to

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meet a man or a woman who have kept their head in good fortune than men and women who have lost heart in privation. Give a man the nearest approach to complete liberty possible in this world of comparative slavery — and what a “hash” he makes of it as a rule! Discipline is good for all of us. You know where you are under discipline, whereas individual irresponsibility demands that a man should make the most of his freedom — and few men know what to do with their liberty when they are given the opportunity to do what they like with it. Modern education rarely helps to give a man resources within himself. When its object is not to lend him a kind of intellectual “pretence,” it is designed to give him the quickest means to get the better of his brother men. I always think that the ways in which most men and women pass their hours of leisure are the greatest condemnation of the good which modern education is supposed to confer on the educated. A worker, after all, has a right to do what he likes with his liberty. It is the life led by the majority of those who never work which is the worst criticism of their professed ideals. And yet, the ideal even of those who work is often merely to imitate, even in a small way, the poverty of

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imagination which the leisured classes bring to their leisure. But nothing would seem to teach people wisdom in this respect — not even the knowledge that the leisured classes are by no means the happiest. If they have no worries, the majority of people will invent some — and groan louder than any. There is always something out of everybody's reach — and that "something" will often ruin contentment with things they already possess. It is this "little more" which leads most of us astray. For when we have obtained that "little more" there is always a "little more" to entice us after that. And so we waste our lives in a vain endeavour to reach the happy unattainable, while all the while we ignore that "jolly good time" we could have if we were brave enough to go our own way and enjoy the benefits which are already our possession. But this is, of course, a "trite" remark. Nevertheless, it is so wise that you can't teach it to anybody. They just have to learn it for themselves; which most of them do, too late!

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Small Efforts are the Most Difficult

IT is strange how many of us will rise to a big occasion, while failing lamentably in those teeny-weeny ones which really make up the humdrum routine of the Everyday. It is comparatively easy to be heroic on occasion; so supremely difficult, apparently, to be merely pleasant. In death, disaster or disease, a dozen people will rush to succour you who, when no sacrifice is demanded of them, will seem deliberately to thwart that metaphorical ray of sunshine which is trying to pierce the mud-coloured clouds surrounding your existence. A hundred hands will endeavour to extricate you from the mire of circumstance, whereas scarcely one will be outstretched to give you a helping hand onward when once you have reached dry land. Too many people seem to attain their own salvation on the misery of other people. It makes them feel heroic; it makes them feel "religious"; it makes them feel inclined to seize their left hand with their own right one and to shake it vigorously. Their acts sometimes pass

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for sympathy; but they are often merely so many means toward a self-complaisant end. Of course the world is all the better for those "means," but it would be better still were that willingness to serve far more consistent. Philanthropy is at all times a grateful sacrifice for the philanthropists; the difficulty is to reconcile the distaste of "philanthropized" with the gratitude they feel they ought to show and hate being obliged to do so.

As I wander through life I am continually struck by the fact that the average Englishman and woman of education keeps his and her politeness in a neat compartment docketed — "for special occasions only." So few people are what I will call humanly polite — that is, polite to **EVERY** human being, simply because he is a human being and so more or less his own brother. They will have one code of manners for their equals; another for their "inferiors"; and yet another for their "superiors." They will, as it were, recollect the age of chivalry in the presence of a well-dressed pretty woman standing up in an omnibus, and join with those whose cry is "Equality of the Sexes" when she happens to be poor as well as plain. With them the "unexciting" is always "unnecessary," to be treated

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with all the off-hand manner accorded to other unnecessary things. They seem so frightened of their own dignity, their own self-importance, their own inner-exclusiveness, that their Human Philosophy is apparently: “Be rude to every man, until you have found out that it will pay to be polite to him.” It makes life very dull and unnecessarily unhappy so often. It would seem easier for most of us to win a decisive battle than take even the smallest personal interest in anyone outside our clan.

Most people pass through life as if their smiles were of such value that to accord one is an honour; to withhold one, a rebuke. They expect perfect manners from other people, but think so little of their own. They will ponder hard before they give a “kind word” to others, while “unkind words” will be spoken without a moment’s hesitation. They will, metaphorically speaking, smile condescendingly at Mrs. Smith’s efforts to beautify her backyard, while they will spend long hours tearing her private character to shreds. Perhaps, it may be that in beautifying her backyard, Mrs. Smith is creating a kind of subtle criticism of their own; whereas, her fall from moral grace is, as it were, a bouquet thrown at the probity of her neighbours. So

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much unnecessary misery is caused in life by the unkindly interest of people in other people's business, and the slight encouragement they give them in all those small matters of the Everyday where encouragement is most required. Manners far more than class divide the world into separate warring sections. So many women will greet in all geniality their equals, who will deliberately ignore the existence of their own charwomen wearily standing in a queue. So many men will require an outward deference from their employees, who would consider it beneath their dignity, as an employer, to return them even the first rudiments of common politeness. Most of us are slave-drivers at heart — slave-drivers or sycophants. It has made human society a deadly, contemptible affair — as every affair is deadly and contemptible which is founded on snobbish values and administered according to the ideal of boors.

Speaking personally, I delight far more in familiarity from people I am never likely to see again, than from those whom I know, to the cost of my peace of mind, I shall run across almost every day of my life. But most people keep their bad manners for those whom they are not likely to see again, and their good ones, only

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where they may create an enviable reputation among the neighbours.

If only people were more pleasant to each other during the drab round and common task, life would be so much more agreeable, less a perpetual defensive fight against pin-pricks and that soft claw which conceals talons. I suppose the reason why men and women are so rarely polite consistently is because there is no glory in being merely amiable, they cannot bank their amiability against such a time when they fail completely to live up to their best. They find it so much easier to shut the door in their neighbour's face than ease his loneliness by a kind word. True, there are a few people who really do seem glad that their fellow-passengers through life were born at all. But the majority seem to look upon such a fact more in the light of an irritating actuality. They regard their fellow-men from the point of view of the schoolmaster, or the policeman, or a judge; too rarely as a fellow traveller groping, like they are, through a maze of puzzling intricacy. It would seem sometimes as if they looked for an apology from their fellow-men for being alive at all. At least, that is the manner in which they meet them in the daily intercourse of the daily round.

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I wish that I could re-write some of the Ten Commandments, I would scrap so many of them. Most of them cannot be lived up to either in the letter or in the spirit. They are useless for all practical purposes. To my mind the motto of the Boy Scout, "Do at least one act of kindness each day" — is worth more than all the Ten put together. I have just received from a Spanish reader a little translation of a poem which all Spanish children are made to learn. It is a poor translation, commonplace in language and trite in idea. Yet it contains an injunction so easy to fulfil and so wise in its knowledge of a very human need — that most people will class it among Christmas card poetry, and exclaim "How very 'Ella Wheeler Wilcox'!" It runs—

If any little word of mine
May make some life the brighter;
If any little song of mine
May make one heart the lighter;
God help me speak that little word
God help me sing that lay,
So may some sad and lonely heart
More bravely face each day.

How utterly trite! I can hear the superior person cry. True. And so are all simple things and simple people. But often — how wise they are in their simplicity!

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The Adventure of Life

EVERY one should come “up against it” once in his life. Not for too long — that way bitterness lies — but long enough for him to realize the essentials of happiness, long enough to give him that insight into the pitfalls of human existence which only trouble can show. Most of us are parochial at heart. We make even life in London a kind of villeggiatura, during each day of which we follow a circumscribed route, doing much the same things, listening to much the same ideas, meeting much the same kind of people, until at last our lives are led well-nigh within a radius of five miles, punctuated perhaps by a few excursions into the outer world — with a preference for those which are, to all intents and purposes, an exact replica of the world we have left behind. The trouble with the Comfortable is that they learn so little from their comfort. They think it belongs to them — an inherent right. They are always the first to cry that “Man is master of his fate,” and that “This is the best of all possible worlds to live in.” Both lies! But when a man is “up against it,” when pain and trouble meet him at every

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turn, he begins to realize that he is not the master of his own destiny, but rather the playing of some ironic fortune. And this realization often teaches him understanding and humility — the two most precious possessions in the growth of the “soul.” One learns things of greater value when one serves than when one directs — though directors may decry that opinion. So I believe that each one of us should go through a period of that kind of serving which is only a polite name for “slavery.” Unless we know something of the world from, as it were, the standpoint of the “dregs,” we really know very little of the world whatever. And how little we understand life until we have a personal and intimate knowledge of many of its phases. And what is life but a wonderful adventure wherein anything may happen, and the world just one big labyrinth to explore? It is unwise to treat either life or the world with too great deference; it is doubly unwise to mistake our own temporary tin-pot power and importance for something which merits eternal fame! One learns secrets of greater value in a forced humility than in all the praise and applause with which admirers may welcome our success.

And yet, how few there are who are imbued

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by anything even approaching a love of adventure. Curiosity, outside the curiosity which is "gossip," is one of the very rarest virtues. When you speak to the majority of people of "adventure" just round the corner, they look sly, believing that you refer to some flaxen-haired barmaid. But every new phase of existence is an "adventure," and to live for a while outside the sphere to which you are more accustomed, is as intellectually exciting as any game of derring-do. Where I have found heaps of people mildly interested in other men's theories and ideas, I have scarcely come across one who was interested in men — as human beings and as psychological studies. To the adventure of killing they thrill, but the adventure of *living* leaves them unresponsive and cold. The world arouses no curiosity in them at all. They like their own little "niche," and anything outside it seems to them to threaten their smug peace of mind, likely to prove a danger to their own dignity and self-importance. They will willingly explore a jungle, should opportunity occur, and glory in the fact that they may possibly shoot a tiger therein; but to mix with and to know those who live and die in the human jungle around them bores them; they neither want to know the den-

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izens of that jungle, nor even to know of them. They are not interested in life outside their own existence and the existence of those related to them; they are not interested in men as men, but only as convenient social companions who must not disturb them by anything untoward — either intellectually or morally.

It has always been my “dream” to meet some one thrilled by the adventure of life, and I have never once found him. I have found plenty who will go forth to judge, or merely to allay some more or less idle curiosity regarding their brother men; but I have never come across one who neither judged nor wanted to reform, one who wished merely to live on equal terms with all men, as a simple man among other simple men; one who wished to get at the heart of every type of man; one who thrived at that adventure which is consciousness; one who was free both in spirit and in body; one to whom the world was just the stage on which is enacted a wonderful drama — a drama in which he is quite content to play a super’s part, knowing that a “super,” because he is unimportant, generally manages to see most of the play.

And because I have never yet come across such an individual, I own, in all humility, my

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life has been lived far too long and far too often within, as it were, the shadow of the parish pump. I am one of those who are only completely natural when alone, and who in company become self-conscious. And alas! the self-conscious never get to know men as they really are. I only lose my self-consciousness when I am alone with a really sympathetic companion — I mean, not one who metaphorically holds my hand, and, gazing into my eyes, murmurs to me that the world doesn't appreciate me at my proper worth; I mean some one who can aid me to detach myself from my self-consciousness and follow my every mood, simply because he understands the worst and the best of me. Of course, I have now reached that age when self-consciousness becomes one of the minor offences. But I have outgrown it only now when its "cure" has become of no importance and slight benefit. Were I able to live my life over again, knowing what I know now, being what I am to-day! — but ah! how many there are who secretly utter the selfsame wish and just as ineffectually. We can only stand aside, helping others to live the kind of life which we consider the happiest and the most valuable for them, "dreaming" at the same time that, perhaps, in another existence,

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we, too, may benefit from that education, which is surely the only *raison d'être* of life. As it is, we can only envy those who know the life they want to live and live it, wondering at the same time if they ever realize the virtue of their philosophy, the value of their courage. And so, were I, on the spur of the moment, asked to name two people whose life seemed fullest of what they wanted, and who thus must have found not only wisdom, but also happiness, I should name "Jack London" and "Gaby Deslys." A strange combination, you exclaim! I own it is. But why I envy these two is that, not only did they win success along those paths where their ambition led them, but they both died before misery could square its account with joy. They died in the late afternoon. Both possessed natures whose greatest tragedy would have been to endure the inevitable twilight of physical life; both dreaded that twilight, because to them, more than to most of us, it would have meant a long and painful "fifth act" to that life story of theirs which Fate had told very completely in three. And both escaped the greatest tragedy of all, which is decay and old age. The art of the successful life is to know when to retire — even when to die.

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The Wrong Way to Look at Work

A CERTAIN kind of originality is very easy to acquire. You have only to do the unsuitable thing, and, if you escape the accusation of being eccentric, ten to one you will be called "distinctly out of the common." I know a woman who all her life has done the outrageous thing, but done it so gaily that the world became willing at last to overlook anything she might do, providing she always did the one thing she should not have done. And she always did. I will call her "Mrs. Barchester." Why? Because that does not happen to be her name. We call her the "older Mrs. Barchester" because there is a younger one, and to refer to her as "Mrs. Barchester senior" would, as it were, put her into stiff corsets and dress her up in black satin, bugles and jet. "Older" she may be, but "senior" — never! She has already had several "childhoods," and is now in her pre-ultimate one. To celebrate her sixty-fifth birthday she gave a dance. And not only did she give a dance, but she expected to dance at her own

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dance, too, which is not the usual expectation of hostesses aged sixty-five. Moreover, she realized her desire, since every man who was her guest felt obliged to ask her. She, of course, knew they would have to. She thoroughly enjoyed herself. I think she danced every dance, and danced them all extremely well. She had always been a good dancer. The War alone was able to take away her dancing shoes, as it were. Gaiety was a young people's affair during those tragic years, when so many of them had to die. Elderly ladies had a far greater personal success serving in canteens. Mrs. Barchester served in a canteen. She preferred that kind of War work to the one of hurling metaphorical bouquets out of windows at returned soldiers and making a box of woodbines go the longest way possible in a hospital ward. For once in a way, she did the one thing suitable to her age, with a consequence that most people forgot all about her and the rest didn't care what she happened to be doing. But with the signing of the armistice, twenty years fell from her heart. She immediately took up her life where she had been obliged to leave it in 1914, and happily found it much as usual. At least, she made it much as usual, for the reason — as she herself expresses it — age

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has this thing in common with youth — it doesn't care. The “older Mrs. Barchester” doesn't care. She doesn't care what people say about her, so long as they say something. And she has always managed to provide fuel for that kind of conversation. Now, at sixty-five, she dances as vigorously as she danced at twenty-one. Whom she dances with doesn't matter now as it did then. She just shuts her eyes; and, so long as she is dancing, so long as the band is playing, her thoughts are far away in those late Victorian days when she was something of a “professional beauty.” So she lives her life over again, and is fairly happy on the whole. And some people throw mud at her efforts to preserve the spirit of youth; but most people throw flowers. She is doing the “unsuitable thing,” and doing it with a gay heart, which, after all, is the only way to do it. Pangs of conscience ruin the complexion.

But all this seems a very roundabout way of arriving at the point of my story, namely, that, if you view life at twenty as you should only do at sixty, people say, “How admirable! How earnest! Such a nice, steady young man!” Whereas, if you view life at sixty through the vision of twenty-one, they are equally enthusi-

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astic. Only if you're young when you are young, and old when you really are past your prime, do people take you for granted and say nothing at all. They just accept you as they accept their easy chair, and, in parenthesis, miss you far less when you break down and are tenderly borne away behind horses or in a motor-hearse driven on the first speed. It is so fatally easy for the old-young to become nothing but old men, and the young-old to develop the giddiness of "flappers"! If only the serious young man could preserve his youth as well as his seriousness, and the giddy old "sport" temper his giddiness with some of the wisdom of old age, people whose hearts do not march abreast with their age would then be such a supreme good fortune to know. But how is it done? Alas! I do not know. All I know is that it is as difficult for the young to mature broadly as it is for the old to grow older gracefully. Only commonplace people seem able to do the right thing just at the age when they ought to do it, and just in that unnoticeable manner in which it should, perhaps, be done.

I sometimes think that old age was given us to make us work. Were we always young, how many of us would grind and endure?

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Rather, we should all be playing in the sun, love-making and merry-making, "travelling in little things." But old age without having a feather bed to lie upon is indeed on the hard, hard rocks. Unfortunately, feather beds are expensive luxuries, so, if you want to own one, you must have quite a lot of money; and to have quite a lot of money you must do quite a lot of work. And there's the rub. For the people lying on feather beds have a mild contempt for people who must perforce lie on hard mattresses, while those who have to sleep on the cold ground are never forgiven their past trespasses. The world regards success from the feather-bed point of view. Your bank balance, not your virtues, places you on the right-hand side of the throne, and carves the promise of a glorious resurrection on your tombstone. And perhaps it is better thus. For if we put godliness before a sound business training, we should still be painting our bodies with woad and entertaining our friends to stewed donkey's knuckle-bone in the dining corner at the far end of our cave. And yet, it always seems to me that work, like music, must be born in one. Most of us perform a little on some kind of an instrument, but very few of us can really play. We pick out the

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“ pretty bits ” and leave the fireworks to those who like to master them; but only those who have mastered the difficulties associated with “ fireworks ” ever give a recital at the Steinway Hall. It is their reward. We others “ amuse our friends,” or hope we do. And so it is with work. Not many of us work more than we are obliged. Those who do, ride eventually in their Rolls-Royce cars and are treated to some of the deference accorded to gods by people who are paid so much a year to do so. Were art the summit of man’s ambitions, millionaires would be classed with plumbers, and placed on a lower plane than ballet-dancers and mat-makers in Berlin wool. As it is, money is placed on the topmost throne, and to it the arts come begging. This does not make life exactly decorative, but it helps to keep men practical. After all, art has elevated man from the level of the animals, but work has given him all those comforts his body loves. And most people manage to feel extremely “ elevated ” when they are comfortable. Money is, as it were, the symbol of the easy-chair, and it is human nature to prefer to live in a room with a Chesterfield couch, than one in which there is nothing to sit down upon and be at “ ease,” except that purely

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spiritual "ease" which belongs to a lovely picture, a lovely view, or even a futurist wall-paper.

I wonder why it is that most people, when they expatriate on the benefit of work, always make it sound as unattractive as virtue described in a Sunday School. Work really is an "adventure," with all the risk and the thrill, the disappointment, and occasionally the reward, of adventures in more commonly regarded "romantic" walks of life. To achieve anything whatsoever, one must endure drudgery. That is the worst of it, or the best, whichever way you look at life. Nothing worth getting is to be got quickly. The blessings we achieve for ourselves are far more satisfactory than those we receive from on high. But drudgery is the one thing which few of us can triumph over. We thrill to the final glory, as it were, but we cannot force ourselves to plod towards it step by step. We can understand great music, but we cannot make great music ourselves. We lack the will-to-work. But do not blame us. Work is as much a gift of the gods as genius, though it is popularly supposed that anyone can acquire it. But they can't. We may cultivate what faint ray of the divine spark we possess, but the most we ever accomplish is the most that the majority

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of us ever achieve — that is, to do many little things and not one thing really well. And work, alas! is so often just another name for drudgery. Even its rewards seem to come too late too often. So most people do as little as they can, and live to fleece those who are enjoying the reward of their labours with rheumatism or other chronic complaints of middle age. But you can't fleece the aristocrats of the arts, simply because there is as a rule nothing whatever to fleece. So youth for the most part goes heedless on its way, being told that it really is enjoying itself, simply because it is young. But the only youth which is really and truly enjoyable is young middle age. And to be able to enjoy that youthfulness is the supreme reward of hard work. The "comfortable forties," when they are "comfortable," are very comfortable indeed. Not in the making of more and still more money does a man find happiness. There is no happiness in money as a hoard. "Call no man successful," Lord Beaverbrook writes, "until he has left business with enough money to live the kind of life that pleases him. The man who holds on beyond this limit is laying up trouble for himself and disappointment for others. Success in the financial world is the prerogative of young men. A man who has not

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succeeded in the field before middle age comes upon him will never succeed in the fundamental sense of the term. He will just go on from year to year, making rather more or rather less money by a toil to which only death or old age will put a term.” Not the making of money for the sake of merely being rich ought to be a man’s motto, but making it in order that one may live independently the kind of life which is nearest to the heart’s desire. And that, it seems to me, is a far greater encouragement to work hard than all those adages about working for the sake of work — a kind of bodily duty to the world which should go hand in hand with our spiritual duty to God — which most middle-aged successful men recite to youth, the while they throw out their portly stomachs with the unspoken injunction to become “even as we.”

Work doesn’t become a “romance” until you are working on your own and for yourself. I would far sooner be the sole proprietor of a village store than the head clerk of a big department belonging to somebody else. I don’t believe that any man really enjoys his work until his work belongs to him alone. A “profit,” however small, is far more thrilling than a big salary. And boys should be educated with this

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ideal in view. It would inspire them far more than the picture of prosperity in a frock coat and the ability to put on a top-hat on a rainy day without the slightest financial qualm. If parents only realized this, there would not be so many young men about who, having been through Eton or Harrow, and later on the universities, when all is over, are worth exactly eighteen shillings a week in the world of labour which they must enter to fight their way upward. In most cases, the higher education is only really valuable as a "hobby," and "hobbies" are the happiness of middle age.

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The Prose which so often Obscures the Poetry

IN our dreams we are all too apt to forget those unromantic details of which they must eventually be composed if ever they are to be realized. We thrill to the glory of fulfilment, while turning a convenient blind eye towards those inglorious victories and defeats which we must go through before the ultimate glory can be realized. And sometimes we are so discouraged by these defeats, so little elated by these victories, that we turn aside from our main purpose and spend the rest of life wondering cynically why things at close hand always appear so tame, whereas they seemed so wonderful when viewed from a distance. To give but one instance. We visit a friend in his house, and are entranced by the comfort and beauty and orderliness of everything that is his. If only we too had such a home, how supremely happy we should be! We forget that such beauty, such comfort, such orderliness, were only arrived at after long periods of tiresome attention to detail; that each is only kept perfect by much sacrifice, hard work,

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and a close attention to the dullest and most prosaic facts. But most of us don't consider such things. We only see the result, and look at it under the impression that it has been arrived at suddenly, as by a miracle; and that it will retain its enviable qualities by virtue of circumstances equally miraculous. The Way to Paradise has to be laid down, weeded and otherwise kept in order — though, as we regard that road from a distance, we usually fail to realize that we ourselves will have to do all the hard work. I always feel inclined to ask, when I listen to people telling me exactly what the After-Life is going to be, because they have been given a full description of it by some communicative spirit on the Other Side: Who does the washing up? Who lays down the drains? Who empties the dustbin? And if those who must perforce do these things, find the Other Life quite such an eternally "good time" as those who describe it to me are never tired of declaring that they do? The old-fashioned picture of a Heaven full of singing angels playing harps was less fraught with such awkward, but very necessary, leading questions. For, to speak in metaphor, you can't cheer up a dying golfer with the promise that life after death will be so like life before

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it that he can pass over in the hope that he may yet reduce his handicap, without also depressing the dying caddie and expiring greenkeeper with the fact that he may still be required to carry clubs and use a mowing-machine and lawn-roller.

But not only in our hope of a jolly future life do we instinctively ignore the unpleasant, while “visioning” its ultimate beatitude. As we look toward the future and dream of the day when all our ambitions will be gratified, we overlook the commonplace, and often sordid, details which must still make up the foundation of that long-last haven in which we shall find — or think we shall — most of that happiness which the present denies us, be rid of all those petty annoyances which mar so effectively the illusive blissfulness of to-day. At fifty years of age, we say to ourselves when young, we shall have made sufficient money to retire, and, retiring, will be able to live that kind of life after which our innermost heart more greatly yearns. We forget that at fifty — we shall, alas! be fifty; and, as some one has disagreeably reminded us, after fifty years of age the best things of life are behind us and all the more unpleasant things are well on the way. Looking back on my own life, I am invariably struck by the fact

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that the most trite adage is usually the most true. For example, the disappointment of ambition is that the only happiness it contains lies in the struggle to achieve it; that the attainment of it is not at all the wonderful thing we believed it would be. We hated the struggle at the time. It is only when the struggle is over, and we may, as it were, sit back in our easy-chair, put our feet on the mantelpiece and criticize the younger generation adversely, that we realize that the easy-chair doesn't seem nearly so comfortable as it did when we sat on it for the first time; that to sit with our feet on the mantelpiece becomes an uncomfortable position very soon, and that the younger generation we criticize seem to be enjoying themselves far more than we are, and don't really care a rap for our critical attitude.

The truth is that nothing ever does give us the unalloyed joy we expected it to give. Love doesn't give us happiness; it gives us—just love, accompanied by a good many agonizing moments. Work does not bring us happiness; it brings us merely the satisfaction of labour. Neither does ease. Neither do friends and acquaintances. Neither does religion, nor beauty, nor youth. Happiness, I sometimes

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think, is a word which should always be preceded by a verb in the past tense, or, maybe, by one in the future. But we never realize it when it is by our side, walking with us hand in hand. At that moment we view it, if we consider it at all, as an "absence of pain"—as Schopenhauer did—a kind of peaceful prelude to some actual joy long anticipated. But somehow that actual joy is never realized. So we wake up at last to the fact that the only happiness it contained, lay in its one-time promise, or as the memory of that promise, half-fulfilled—a memory which becomes the more resplendent as it recedes into the past. There is nearly always a flaw in the amber, as the saying goes; but it looks so small as to be almost invisible as we look at it from a distance. When we actually possess that amber, it is human nature to regard that flaw far more steadfastly than the beauty which surrounds it.

As a matter of fact, we none of us know in what real happiness consists. We think we do, so we set forth to capture it. That it always eludes our grasp makes many of us extremely "disgruntled" with things as they are. For one thing, most of us make the mistake of believing that happiness is some big, concrete, permanent thing. It isn't. It consists in just those in-

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numerable teeny-weeny moments of joy which are scattered through even the dullest, longest day — so teeny-weeny, in fact, that we often don't perceive them, though without them we should, most of us, be driven to suicide. Hope, memories, the glory of the sunset, the wonder of the dawn, the clasp of a hand in friendship, the kiss of love, the pageant of the seasons as they come and go, the rest after labour, the resumption of work after long repose, the blessing of sleep at night, the gratification that we can meet our creditors; art, music, the lively joy of a pleasant pastime, the thrill of something mastered at long-last, the temporary respite from some unpleasant duty, an alleviated pain — the hundred and one momentary pleasures to which it seems contemptible to give the name of Happiness, but which *are* Happiness nevertheless — the only unalloyed moments of happiness we ever know. The glory is that there are so many of them; our shame that we appreciate them so seldom and let them pass away unthanked so often.

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One Way of Looking at a Debt Repaid

PEOPLE who go forth into the world looking for gratitude are simply asking for disappointment. Personally, I am not quite sure that they ought to expect to come across it. To feel grateful is usually another way of saying that you feel inferior. And people hate to feel inferior. Thus, acts which on the surface look extremely like gratitude are really and truly the method by which one person recovers his equality with another. Some one does you a favour, and oh! you are so pleased! But you are not half so pleased as when you are able to return that favour, and so have no further necessity to feel grateful. If you can return that favour with interest, you are more pleased still. By just so much as your favour exceeds the favour you received do you then feel superior. Moreover, and this also must be taken into consideration, the generous person always feels himself secretly elated by his generosity. It may be a very glorious elation, but he does feel that, by his act of charity, he has gone up one step in his own estimation, and God is sure

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to be delighted. And, perhaps, that emotion should be his only reward — the only reward he is entitled to expect. In the same way, the man who has benefited by that act of kindness feels at a discount with himself until he has wiped it off by an act placed to the credit side of his drawing account on virtue. Very true indeed is the saying: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” It is! By such blessings we seem to rise superior to the common herd, and feel, as it were, that now at least we can wipe off some of our minor sins and still leave a little virtue in hand for a day when the devil pops into tea. “I am indebted to you for so many things!” says the Unfortunate Man, the while he mentally contrives to pay off that debt as quickly as he can. “Don’t mention it,” we reply, being extremely annoyed if he doesn’t. Thus, the adage to do good by stealth is asking for an act of pure heroism which few people can achieve. After all, as most people sum it up, if I am expected to feel grateful, there was no real altruism behind the generosity of which I was the object. It was just a “loan,” with gratitude demanded as a percentage until that loan is wiped off.

And alas! experience and observation force

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me to the conclusion that most people do regard their generosity as a loan. If they cannot hope for an act of generosity in return, the only thing which will eventually wipe off the debt — and nothing but death does really wipe it off — is a loud and lifelong gratitude. So it all evolves itself at least into a kind of virtuous exchange. I raise my hat to a lady, and she bows acknowledgment. I have got my reward. If, however, she only nods, I feel that she still owes me something; and, if she stares at me unblinkingly and passes on, I feel towards her something of the feeling which a man has in his heart for the thief who has picked his pocket. She has stolen the goods without paying for them. And, as with this minute form of give and get-back, so with the more important ones. Thus it is that I am convinced that the man who deliberately and with a joyful heart sets forth to be generous has no more reason to demand gratitude in return than the man who lends money in all directions and expects to get it back again, with or without interest. Thus, when I lend money (which is rare, since experience has educated me to the knowledge that I ought never to have done it at all), I always immediately place the loan among the rest of my bad debts.

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I may get it back, in which case it will seem almost like a present from on high. But I don't expect to; consequently, I am not liable to be disappointed. But what I do realize — and the realization gives my soul a certain amount of comfort — is that I have placed at least one act to the credit side of that ledger which the Recording Angel, otherwise my own conscience, is supposed to keep for future reference. And that reward is the only one I have any right to, or should look to receive. In fact, I sometimes think that we ought to feel extremely grateful to ungrateful people. They provide us with a balance of virtue on the credit side. When they return our generosity by an act of generosity to us, they wipe off the debt, and thus diminish that balance considerably. So we are left alone with the memory of our own short-lived satisfaction, a state of beatitude which, pondered over to excess, will sooner or later turn us into sanctimonious prigs. After all, the generous man who expects gratitude is not far removed from the money-lender who demands a high percentage. If he gets it, he is satisfied; if he doesn't, hell is let loose in the land. But none of us have a very high opinion of the pure altruism of money-lenders, have we?

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Clean Honesty of Youth

I ALWAYS think that one of the saddest things to watch in all life is the gradual change in the eyes of youth from the pagan truthfulness of young life to the furtive slyness of the adult. Youth may often be obscene, but its obscenity is the obscenity of the savage — something natural, and, because natural, inoffensive. Grown-up people are rarely obscene — they have cultivated the “camouflage” of polite society. But to regard old Adam peeping cautiously from behind that camouflage is a disgusting sight, because it is so dishonest, so hypocritical in its masked impurity. There is nothing quite so indecent as a fig-leaf, nor anything more crudely filthy than the wisp of tulle which is blown by some mysterious wind conveniently across the nude. The Elizabethan drama with its outspoken bawdiness is far less indelicate than the modern *Palais Royal* farce written around the promiscuousness of hotel bedrooms, the authors seeking to create in their audience that laughter which comes from a sight of the semi-unveiled — the disgusting furtive raising of the cloak which drapes decency, making even

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the glimpse of a stocking-suspender creative of the shamed "guffaw," the hysteria due to repressed desire — so ugly because repressed.

Young people may often call a spade "a spade" among themselves, but just because they call it a spade without the sly snigger by which their elders refer to it, it outrages the inner feelings infinitely less. It is when they have learned to copy the hypocrisy of their elders, in reference to the facts of life, that their "smut" becomes disgusting — a nasty, slimy dalliance with what should be a perfectly healthy understanding.

One of the most tragic discoveries of youth is the discovery that age is by no means all it preaches; that for the most part it tries to hide its own shortcomings behind a sermon delivered to youth. If only young people could express themselves in words, I sometimes think that the book they would write on grown-up people might easily electrify their readers. But their knowledge comes so slowly. They have become used to it long before they realize that by it they have found their elders out. By this time they have become sly and furtive themselves. Their eyes no longer show that clean healthy laughter of a mind unashamed of its own longings. They have learnt to wink, to lower their voices, to

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slink down the dark alleys of their own nature — alleys darkened artificially — to hide themselves therein, to don the mask of hypocrisy and to preach and to pretend. Up to a certain age children obey their parents unthinkingly; after that — they judge them. Happily, however, by the time they have reached that mature age which could put judgment into forcible language, they are then among the “judged.” So they say nothing, lest in saying everything they unmask the false ideals of their own generation — and each generation has to stand together, just as each class has to stand together, for fear that, disunited and exposed, they fall in ignominy.

It always secretly amuses me to watch the hidden regard which little children give each other after their elders have issued that popular elderly edict which begins with the word “Don’t” and may end with a whipping! It is as if they said to each other: “Aren’t they queer — these grown-up people? We shall have to obey them, because a whipping is unpleasant — but what victims they are of their own unimaginative stupidity!” So they don’t do what they ought not to do, and do it quite without conviction that it is at the same time right. Their elders call them very obedient, and usually go

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and do the reprimanded thing themselves — or something so nearly approaching it as to make no difference in the eyes of their children. And so these same children gradually wake up to the fact that almost everything is allowed to anybody providing they are GROWN-UP. Even they, the children, can have it — providing they camouflage their intention at the same time and are not likely to be found out. What is called a "deliberate falsehood" in her child is termed by its mother a "polite fiction" when she, herself, utters the lie. Her great surprise comes when her children judge her by the same standard by which she once judged them. "Grown-up people can do these things," she would likely say, should she ever learn that judgment — which happily for her self-respect, she rarely does. And so there is born in the young mind the realization that there is one moral law for youth and a much easier one for their elders. They look to their parents to find examples of their own precepts — only to discover a politely camouflaged mass of error, calling that error by quite another name, a name quite staggeringly erroneous.

And so, as I wrote above, to watch the gradual flight of the clean honesty of youth, and the

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equally gradual approach of the sly hypocrisy of age, is one of the saddest things in life. One does not so much regret the passing of innocence as dislike the furtive acknowledgment of truth which supplants it. It is the slow moulding of honest youth to the sly hypocrisy of adult life which robs human existence of a very blessed beauty. It is the gradual belief that an innuendo is essentially more "refined" than an outspoken fact, which slurs, with a thin layer of slime, things which should really be as clean as polished marble. It is the gradual realization in the minds of youth that the basest intentions can be quite successfully masked behind some high-sounding word — which adds a dreariness to growing-up. It is the knowledge, which youth learns from age, that everything is permitted, providing that you disguise it as something else, which adds an unnecessary ugliness to that natural life we should all lead. It is the sad acceptance of the fact that everything conventional is natural, which puts a mask of "Tartuffian" hypocrisy in front of Nature — Nature which should be the most honest and the most cleanly thing in the world, if God, as we are told by grown-up people, really did make man in His own image.

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The Unimportant Glories

THE physical aspect is so important in regard to love and friendship that it is stupid to infer that the Evil One works behind every good dressmaker, and that a man who makes the best of himself is encouraged in his fancy by the devil. Of course, there are a dozen ways of making the best of oneself, of which to dress well is but a primitive example of its technique. But no man or woman who desires to be loved — and all desire to be the object of some one's affection — should deliberately issue forth arrayed in metaphorical curl-papers. They may appear before the world inspired by the very highest moral and altruistic motives; but, should they "cut a ridiculous figure," their influence will be nil. Of course, only the empty-headed sentimentalist is content to play up to any kind of audience; but to find some kind of audience — even if it be merely an audience of one — is necessary to the happiness of life. We may be kings or queens, princes, potentates or pioneers, but daily life, when all is said and done, is, for the most part,

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just getting up in the morning, eating, drinking, making merry with our friends, working, and going to bed at night hoping for at least six hours' sleep. The interludes in this prosaic routine may be glorious, but their glory is transitory. Taken in the aggregate, existence is for the most part commonplace. The "interruptions" may be thrilling, absorbing, magnificent, but *au fond*, the heart realizes that they don't very much matter. What the heart and "soul" are aiming after instinctively, is the discovery that in the everyday of prose there is some one who robs the world of its loneliness, makes our efforts seem worth while, gives "poetry" to the matter-of-fact curriculum by which we gain a wider knowledge of the due meaning of life.

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Loneliness

“**W**RITE,” said a poor maiden-lady to me, “ write of the loneliness of England.” “I might have enjoyed the two years I lived in France and Italy had I not been so lonely,” a young business man once told me. “London is the loneliest place in the world,” some people will say; others that the country bores them; those who have been there, that America is a terribly lonely country, unless you happen to be very rich. In other words, the whole world is a very lonely place. And alas; *it is!* But why — *why?* It shouldn’t be. In all conscience there are plenty of people in it — too many for my liking. Yet each one ploughs a very lonely furrow. A thousand and one almost unsurmountable barriers separate people, few of which are necessary, and most of which are stupid. Men live as if the most suspicious thing in life were their brother-men. They regard them as their potential enemies until they have proved themselves to be friendly, and even then, men are

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supposed to choose their friends from a very restricted social area.

Perhaps the greatest barrier of all is that mediæval thing called Class. Class presupposes the assumption that we may live with, and be seen on terms of intimacy with, a dull lawyer, but not with an entertaining butcher. I am not a naturalist, so do not know if "snobbism" exists in the animal world. But I do know that it exists in the human world, and that it places mankind immeasurably below the meanest thing created in regard to social intelligence. If class were a thing to be judged by merit, it would be entirely sensible. But as it is, the social claims of one man above another are judged by nothing more convincing than the superiority of one whose home is surrounded by a garden, above another who possesses only a backyard wherein his underclothes wave indelicately once a week on a clothesline. The desire of most people to know only those of a more luxurious position in life, however dull and pompous they may be, is only equalled by their dread of getting to know those whose worldly state is less ornate than their own. I always think that the greatest example of unintelligence is shown by the manner in which human beings mix with their brother

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men to the end of intellectual entertainment. If civilization is to be judged by its social amenities, it is the poorest possible dish to set before a travelling king from another star.

It always secretly amuses me to observe the subtle cross-questioning one has to go through after an introduction to a stranger. His object is to find out, not whether you are honest, or straightforward, amusing or merely dull, but if you have been to a public school, are a bank clerk, are "in trade" or of independent means; if you happen to mix with the "best people" or only — just "people"; if you are a man he can safely invite to his home — not from any dread that you may drink, or steal the silver, or try to make love to his wife; but merely if you are likely to use a spoon *and* fork to eat jelly, or wear a coloured waistcoat with your evening clothes. And then the formality of the Introduction! It is as if those to whom we are introduced felt themselves in some moral or financial danger until they know that the name we call ourselves by is really the name we bear — as vouched for by an acquaintance. It is as if everybody feared that the unknown person with whom they might carry on a casual conversation would suddenly throw their arms around their

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necks and kiss them in public; or worse still, turn out to be a tax-gatherer or a shop-assistant.

And take again the absurd barrier set up between men by that labour upon the proceeds of which they live. The honest, hard-working, intelligent young mechanic is socially as nothing beside the young man of independent means who spends his time mostly in night clubs, in knocking a ball hither and thither with wooden clubs of varying shapes, or in killing animals — infinitely less harmful and infinitely more beautiful than he is himself. All through the various grades of society this snobbery regarding work helps to separate men and make them lonely. A “season’s debutante” will patronize a hard-working young actress, because she, the debutante, is not obliged to labour; and the daughter of a publican will hold her head very high if she be a typist and “cut” her former school-friend because she happens to be “in service.” I always think that the aristocracy and the dustman have this link in common — the one has, socially speaking, nowhere else to soar, the other, also socially speaking, can descend no further. Consequently, providing they fulfil the conventions of their order, they will not be “dropped.” Of course, there are “tramps” — but then

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“tramps” compose merely the “Bohemian set” of the lower orders.

So even a man’s work may provide a barrier between himself and those with whom he would be likely to find tastes in common. Which fact would, perhaps, not be so absurd, were it not for the recognized custom that a successful man’s wife, sons and daughters also believe they share his merit — to the detriment of families less successful in the race for a resplendent existence.

Speaking personally, I am always thankful that I seem to have been born with no vestige of the “class sense.” I find my friends in the most unlikely places and — as viewed through the spectacles of my maiden-aunts — among the most “impossible” people. But the fact is that, when I feel drawn towards somebody, I care not who they may be, what they may have done, or whither they may be bound — socially or financially. I have discovered that only those to whom we are drawn irresistibly have anything to give us or we to offer them. The people who only look for their friends among those inhabiting the same restricted neighbourhood, moving in the same restricted social “set” — must either be very unimaginative, or possess that type of mind which, so long as it is uttering its

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“pet” platitudes to somebody, invariably feels as if it were being nicely entertained. These people look to find in their “friends” nothing more thrilling than a pair of ears, a public school accent, well-cut clothes and a mental state which appears satisfied by listening to a recital of somebody else’s daily trivial round and relating their own in their turn, for just so long as there is some one near at hand who will not interrupt them too often. No wonder, when these people find themselves alone, they are lonely. But their loneliness is not pitiable. And real loneliness is very pitiable indeed — even though it is a sign of social cowardice very often.

One of the most thrilling, as well — and I must confess it! — the most tardy discoveries of my life was the fact that the world is full of the most amusing and interesting people if only you have the courage to seek them out. When I was a very young man, I — like most young men — hugged to my breast secret social ambitions. I believed, also like most young men, and many considerably older, that the people above me socially, who showed no urgent desire to know me, must consequently be worth knowing. I was not exactly a “snob,” but it thrilled me to think that I stood, and could be seen, metaphorically

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speaking, on the doormat of the Great occasionally. I was immensely impressed by false social values. I believed that the atmosphere in which my Ego could widest expand lay somewhere between Belgrave Square and the Savoy Hotel. Could I command the spiritual resources of that locality, I felt that I might find therein a spiritual home. They were the years when I found a greater satisfaction walking side by side with some one superlatively well-dressed though dull, than walking side by side with some one quite interesting, or amusing, but clothed as from the leavings of a rummage sale. They were the years when a reflected glory was very satisfying. I wanted to be judged by my "friends" and they consequently must be of a very enviable order. It lasted for quite a long period — this state of seeking inner satisfaction among purely artificial values. Then, at last, I found out that bores are confined to no class, that they are everywhere, and that the only social "set" worth living for is the "set" you make for yourself out of all the heterogeneous collection of humanity who daily line your path. I realized then that dull people, unless useful from a purely business standpoint, are best "dropped" — no matter what may be their station in life. To keep

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up acquaintanceship with them only adds yet another troublesome interruption to the thrilling adventure of life. There is no greater ennui than knowing too many people — none of whom you will care two straws if you never see again. And this, after all, is but a picture of what people call “society” — be it exclusive or very Bohemian. Keep your “mere acquaintances” without a radius of fifty miles. Nearer than that, be sure they will come to see you just when you don’t want them, or you will run across them just when mutual small-talk will only provide ten minutes of pronounced distaste. Think of all the long and weary hours of life we spend talking to people who don’t interest us, trying to entertain people who are not at all entertained by our efforts; and then remember how short life is — and what emotional experiences each day may contain if we do not fritter away the hours by merely offering ourselves in sacrifice to some polite fetish. Be hide-bound by no class prejudice and you will never be really lonely, that is, never more lonely than we all of us are, and most of us must be, in life. Don’t question your friends, and be even less inquisitive regarding mere acquaintances. After all, what does it matter who a man may be so long as

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for half an hour, when you find yourself discussing with him a certain topic, he interests you. That is all that matters, so far as he is concerned. Build your life up around a very few people and only those whom you are able to love. Ignore the others surrounding you; otherwise they will merely prove tiresome and never for one instant help you onward and upward. The adventure of life is so thrilling; the world is so wide; the variety of human beings so great that it is foolish to restrict yourself merely to one set of people, to confine your energies within one special code; to imprison yourself behind the bars of what at its best is merely prejudice and convention. If you set out to CHOOSE your friends, you will never find the friends you seek. You can't choose friendship, any more than you can choose love. The choice is made within you — by some spiritual or physical need within you which the soul recognizes as beauty.

Friendship — real friendship — is at all times indefinable. But having found your friend, give of yourself with both hands. The intimate knowledge of another mind is as an opening into a new world, an education in itself. But friends have to be sought; they will rarely come deliberately to seek you out. They await you on the

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high roads; very rarely in your own drawing-room. There are few moments quite so desolate as those wasted on mere social amenities. To find a friend — even one friend — is worth the sacrifice, if sacrifice be necessary, of a hundred so-called “friends” — because you can’t call them anything else, since you address them by their Christian names and dine with them quite often; and a thousand of those acquaintances who masquerade as “friends,” whose society is at all times a perpetually tiresome interruption to the romantic game of life.

I only ask of my own friends two gifts — the gift of laughter and the genius to ignore “shams.”

Above all, *don’t pretend*. We are loved just as much for the qualities we lack as for those virtues which we may possess. Nature recognizes no “soul” barriers — other than the barrier of dislike. And that should be the only barrier which separates one man from another. And among the “dislikes” I count “bores” far above enemies — since real enemies are as rare as real friends. Most people, who immediately surround us, are a dreary compromise between the two — that is why they are to be avoided like all compromises.

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On Managing Other People

I SUPPOSE that the two most “perfect” beings in the whole world are bachelors’ “wives” and old maids’ “children.” At least, if you really want to learn how a woman should be managed — listen to almost any bachelor on the subject; while, as regards the upbringing of the young — every spinster lady will tell you exactly how it should, or, as is more generally the case, how it should not be carried out. In fact, nearly everybody holds pronounced opinions about the difficulties they have never been called upon to solve. It is human nature to be wise before and after, but rarely during the event. And if these two — a bachelor’s “wife” and an old maid’s “child” — are invariably perfect examples of the good effect of one person upon another, so the most imperfect is always the man who is directed by women (according to other men) and the child which is brought up by a man (according to other women). There is one thing which every man prides himself upon being able to make a success of, that is, his man-

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agement of some woman; while scarcely a woman does not feel that a child delivered solely into her care would develop all those qualities and virtues likely to make it feel quite "at home" even among the dwellers in heaven. It all belongs to that human weakness which likes to imagine that if we cannot lead all men, we can at any rate manage quite easily those with whom we are brought in contact. But the great difficulty in dealing with men and women is, that each one of them is a separate individual, and he who looks quite pliable and placid at a polite distance, can be a mass of acute angles when you have to live with him in close intimacy. One may exist quite peacefully with a thief, whereas to live with some one who likes his bedroom window hermetically sealed at night may easily prove such an obstacle to happiness that only death or long separation will mellow one's sense of exasperation. They are not the big things which divide people, but the comparatively harmless little trifles, so trifling as to appear negligible, until long familiarity makes them appear colossal.

It is safe to say that, according to women, no man can bring up a child — especially no unmarried man. Why matrimony should suddenly

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give married people a knowledge of the management of children I can never imagine. I have known so many parents who were no more capable of bringing up a family than they were capable of scaling Mount Blanc in dancing "pumps." On the other hand, I have known many a bachelor and many a single woman whose children would not only have known happiness, but would have been given that best possible "chance in life" — which is surely the main *raison d'être* of successful parenthood. As for women, up to the age of eighteen the education of a child is surely their natural right. After that age, the influence of the right kind of man will be of far greater benefit. There is nothing quite so cramping as a too absorbent "mother love" towards children who are making tentative attempts to spread their wings and develop their own individual characters. Very few mothers like to own to themselves that their children are growing up and so demand the right to become independent individuals. Men are much more tolerant of this spirit of youthful independence. The reason why many homes resemble so many comfortable prisons is the fact that very few children can develop themselves therein. They are expected to live at

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twenty as they lived at sixteen. How many homes there are which are like well-upholstered cells with "closed doors" to the children who live therein. Consequently they seek outside for that wider life, and for the solution of those many problems which will always beset youth. If only parents could come down from their pedestals and own to a common humanity with their own children, many a young life might be saved from meeting disaster at the very first chance it is given to stand alone in a world of men.

It takes a very big-natured man and woman to own to imperfections in conversation with their children or with others much younger than themselves. Age always likes to feel itself respected, even if it be only for its antiquity. It can so seldom realize that, up to a certain age, youth accepts age unquestioningly, but that, later on, it also judges it. And the parent who is "found out" is judged more harshly than them all. I suppose it is rather hard when, after years of having wielded the metaphorical cane, one has to own that in many instances one also richly deserves a beating. Yet it has to be done, unless youth is to lose touch with its elders; it has to be done if age is to help youth in even the

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slightest extent along the rough road of life. And very few people, in spite of what they profess, realize that example is infinitely more valuable than precept. Precepts are so much easier to give, and there is a kind of "bouquet of flowers" about delivering them which is distinctly gratifying, even if you only present it to yourself. As a matter of fact, I believe that the only moral lessons young people ever do learn are the moral lessons of example. The rest leaves them cold, or merely bores them. Thus the influence of a bad home affects a man all his life long, and many a youthful delinquent standing in the dock ought to have his place taken by his mother or his father. I often wonder how many eighteen-year-old criminals have ever been ultimately reformed. Not many, I am certain. Give a child a good home up to seventeen, and I care not what becomes of him afterwards. He will never go very far, nor very long, along the road which leads to perdition, unless he has inherited some criminal instinct from an ancestor.

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God's Hobby

PEOPLE who are artificial in a garden belong to that type which, if they met you in heaven, would say, "Pleased to make your acquaintance," all the while they priced the value of your celestial robe. A garden is not only a great test of character, but also of that "genuineness" which belongs to honesty of purpose. A man or woman who can "pose" among flowers will never anywhere be natural. To be in the country is a great self-revelation. . . . For no one can pose or do society "stunts" in the garden of a true gardener. . . . There is no knowing what people will turn into after they have lived in a garden for a while. Indeed, it may be said that one does not really know anyone until one has been alone with him among flowers. Nature, who never twaddles, abhors twaddlers, and he who still insists upon "pretending" when alone with Nature, possesses a character so shallow and artificial that he will quite naturally "pretend" with God. The great joy of friendship is to perceive something of that

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real character which few of us reveal except when we are face to face with Nature. I may even go so far as to say that, speaking personally, I never fully trust the man who neither loves animals nor loves a garden. Certainly I can never like him. If God has a "hobby," I think His hobby must be gardening. Flowers are a greater purification of the "soul" than all the moral tracts in all the world. The man who works in a garden because he loves it cannot be thinking evil at the same time. To love Nature is to love beauty, and beauty is, after all, but a subtle manifestation of some divine truth!

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On Falling out of Love

TO fall in love is an “adventure”—perilous often, but thrilling at all times. To fall out of love is tragedy, offering no excitement at all, only a dreary period of self-mortification, a kind of shamed retreat back along the primrose path from which all the primroses seem to have disappeared. All the time one has to bluff one’s way back to one’s own self-respect, and to explain one’s return to the world, whose only greeting is the cry, “I told you so!” An undignified and desolate situation. It is as if we had once set out with a crown on our heads and a sceptre in our hands, and had to explain to ourselves and to everybody else just why we have come back crowned only by an old cloth cap, carrying a walking stick. We feel we have been sold—worse even, that we have sold ourselves. There are so many kinds of love, but alas! we can’t know if it be real love, or merely some kind of physical attraction, until we have put it to that test which is at all times final, and against which there is no appeal, only a dreary making-the-

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best-of-things. And if there be any tragedy worse than waking up one fine morning to the realization that we have staked our all on a bad bargain, and yet have to pay the original price, and go on paying it — I do not want to experience it, either in this life or in the next. If only love could reason! Then it might at least reserve one way of escape. But love is at all times passionate — and in passion there is no such thing as a moment of cool calculation. People in love usually see too much of each other for safety, and not enough for satiety. One can build up the most fairy-like romances around some one we only see, say, twice a week; whereas it is very difficult to preserve the atmosphere of romance around an “idol” we are alone with twelve hours out of every twenty-four. Propinquity can create love; it can also kill it. Unfortunately we never know if propinquity will put it to death until we have passed that barrier which precludes any possibility of retracing our footsteps. There is no awakening so dreary as that which discovers for you the fact that you have given yourself away to some one with whom you share nothing vital in common; that, in reality, the one you love is a “stranger” whom you have kissed and held in your arms

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under the delusion that he was somebody quite different from what he is — some one who only really existed in your own imagination.

All the world loves a lover, even, sometimes an illicit one, providing he is brave enough to pay the price. But for those who, to their own mortification, have fallen out of love — there is no pity. And yet they are so greatly in need of sympathy — as every one is who has staked his all for a “beautiful vision” and only obtained an ugly commonplace fact. It is rare to find some one who will sympathize with you in your mistakes, however honestly you made them. And love, alas! often turns out to be a hideous mistake. Sometimes I think that the poor are so much wiser in their sentimental intuitions than their social betters. They have a convention called “walking out” which is a very wise proceeding. A long and lonely walk will often reveal truths which no period of general conversation or flirtations on sofas will discover. Moreover, there is nothing definite in “walking out.” It is just a kind of social recreation — since there are no tea-parties, nor dances, nor other more or less frivolous amenities to provide men and women with opportunities to play the sex game out before an audience and with each other.

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Send two people in love for a long day in the country alone, and they will return under the impression that they have both been in the seventh heaven. Send them out the next day; they will come back with the idea that only the fifth heaven lay around them. Send them out the day following, and they will return well-nigh matter-of-fact. Keep sending them out — and before very long ninety per cent will return home quite bored. True it is that sometimes a definite engagement will add a new thrill to their intimacy. The “future” will give them a new topic to talk over. They will lay plans for a mutual happiness to come and very often they will believe that in designing this future existence for themselves their very “souls” have met in everlasting understanding. But the real test of their devotion will only come when they have “found each other out.” And it takes sometimes a long period of intimacy alone and undisturbed, before that essential discovery is made. But, take it from me, *everybody has to be found out* before they can honestly declare that they are loved! It is not that we wilfully deceive those who adore us. The fact is that we never know the kind of image which those who love us fashioned in their hearts before they knew us for

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what we really are. The one who is loved most steadfastly is the one who is loved in spite of himself. We all of us carry in our hearts an "ideal," and it is human nature to believe that this ideal has suddenly materialized when, truthfully, all that lent it reality was a charming face, crowned by a charming hat, making charming eyes at us during a charming afternoon. Only a lengthy propinquity will make us realize upon what slight foundations we built our faith, and help us to disentangle the real ego from its surrounding scenic effects. This is where the poor are unconsciously wiser than the rich in their sentimental dalliance. There is, for example, nothing improper in a girl typist and a young clerk spending their holidays together. Nor is there anything like a holiday spent alone with some one for the discovery to be made that our travelling companion is most delightful when seen at odd intervals, and not from breakfast in the morning until bed-time at night continuously for a fortnight on end. That is why I believe in long engagements. A long engagement gives lovers time to quarrel — and they *will* quarrel, sooner or later, as we all must quarrel with those who do not always live up to the ideal we have raised around them in our own hearts. It is after

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we have quarrelled with those we love that we really begin to love them — love them, or, perchance, grow indifferent. Until two people have ceased to play up to one another — either consciously or unconsciously — they can never really know if their love be founded on physical allurement or real understanding of each other's "soul." Any woman can meet half-way under the stars any man who attracts her. The love of kisses and embraces is shared by all alike. But though most people can quite easily kiss eighty per cent of those of the opposite sex whom they meet through life, there are only ten per cent whom they could live with happily after they have grown weary of their kisses. The various love episodes in a man and woman's life are, as it were, a kind of tentative winnowing of this eighty per cent until they have discovered the vital ten. Unfortunately, the social conventions insist upon every man and woman in love living up to the belief that the eighty per cent they *could* love for a time are to be treated by them as if that multitude belonged to the small elect. So we have that very common human tragedy — the tragedy of those who fall out of love and are disgraced accordingly. Personally, were the conventions a question of my own decree, I

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would have semi-engagements as well as full engagements; provisional marriages as well as permanent ones. It is so sad to realize that half the tears we shed come from mistakes we once made with the best intentions in the world. The world never takes the goodness of these intentions into consideration when it apportions blame. Our emotions have made fools of us, and our foolishness is considered criminal instead of being merely human.

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Moral Education by Excess

I SOMETIMES wonder whether the best moral education would not be the education by excess. Repression never kills — it only adds to the thing repressed a greater vitality, a more enduring force. Repression is merely a kind of feeble panacea, a putting-off of the evil moment until such a time when no warning, no threat of punishment, nor realization of its dangers will longer thwart it of its little hour of life. And that moment will come — later, rather than sooner, it must be owned — but surely, nevertheless. Which fact acknowledged always makes me extremely tolerant of those middle-aged people who, in a last burst of vital energy, kick over the traces and pull down with their own hands that conventional structure which they had built up through their lives so painfully — that structure which they hoped would last them as “camouflage” until the very end. That it often doesn’t is surely a fact worthy of pity, rather than condemnation. I know it is gener-

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ally believed that excess breeds greater excess; but experience teaches us that it usually kills all desire. Excess, if it breeds anything, breeds nausea — either acknowledged or secreted. Let me give one small banal example — though I apologize for its banality, while confessing a belief that what is true of small things is equally true of big important ones. All my life, until a few years ago, I had an insatiable longing for wedding-cake, especially the almond paste which crowns it. I never refused to eat thereof, no matter how often it was proffered me. Then, one fine day, I went with a friend to Buszards, and in a moment of psychological illumination purchased a big chunk of the blackest and richest wedding cake they manufactured. It gave me horrible indigestion, and I have disliked wedding-cake intensely ever since. Nowadays you could leave me with the most succulent slice, and I should not taste a crumb. And what is true of such physical “appetites” is equally true of “appetites” more dangerous to our moral well-being. It is a trite saying, of course, that the best husband is he who has sown the most wild oats. He often is. And this for the reason that he knows from experience that “wild oats” quickly become like tasteless husks when once

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you have eaten of them to repletion. The more you repress a thing, the sturdier its hidden growth, the more irresistible its apparent attraction. There is nothing quite so indecent as the veiled indecency — not any veil more useless for its purpose, since it softens the crude outline of the ugly and makes even the basest thing appear not wholly unattractive. A thoroughly obscene story is far more “moral” than a gaily suggested impropriety — since obscenity breeds an immediate revulsion, while innuendo inflames the imagination — lending an importance to something which, in bald language, would revolt by reason of its depravity. So the polite world decks out its vices in metaphorical pink ribbons and white lace, and, at the same time, expects the innocent to feel pride in their inexperience. Thou-shalt-not never has and never will achieve its purpose. Mostly it only increases a secret desire to taste of the forbidden fruit. I sometimes think that the world would achieve a greater moral result if it allowed everybody to do what they wanted to do, and trust that, in doing it, they would soon discover that it wasn’t worth doing after all. As it is, people generally follow their desires, but so furtively, so occasionally, that their falling-away preserves all the

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attraction of novelty; they slink down the descending pathway so slowly that their progress becomes the more sure — and there is no hope of their ever retracing their footsteps until they have reached that miserable end — which is just “Too late.” A good debauch at the beginning might have saved them. By all means let us cry Thou-shalt-not until a boy or a girl is twenty-one. They will then have a good physical account upon which to draw. But after that age — nobody can save them, if they will not save themselves. Better let them “paddle their own canoe.” Given a free hand, they will not, unless they are preternaturally evil (in which case nothing will save them) go very far down the rapids. No normal person will sink very low if we keep him clean and healthy during the first twenty-one years of his life. If, later on, he shows some great inclination towards the things which only experience can teach him their utter unpleasantness, better let him go “the whole hog” deliberately and at once. He will soon want to struggle out of the slime and forever afterwards will look upon it as the nasty thing it is. Be sure he will, whatever we may do or say, put a metaphorical foot into the mud, and, having put in one foot he will put in another —

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slowly, more and more at a time — until to live in the slime will seem only natural. A sudden early and complete immersion would probably have filled him with so much self-disgust that he will avoid it ever afterwards — not because he will be afraid of being found out, but because he will have found *it* out — and dislike the discovery.

I know that such a theory will anger those who preach morality. But I have always found that those who preach morality usually know very little about true morals. They always praise those who flee from temptation, or those who have no inclination to indulge in that vice — that “pet vice,” let it be added, which they, these moral preachers, always condemn above, and at the expense of, all other and maybe greater ones. But sometimes the best way to resist temptation is to fail to resist it; since it often happens that the surest shield against its subsequent attacks is to follow it to its lair and find its ugliness out by experience. Usually there is nothing quite so tasteless as Forbidden Fruit — though you have sometimes to eat thereof in order to discover the fact. As it is, the world, for the most part, decks out the Forbidden Fruits in the gayest colours, refers to them

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in a jesting way, places samples of them here, there and everywhere, and ties a label on each bearing the words "Thou shalt not eat." Surely the most potent attraction that could ever make a tasteless thing seem succulent! If I were a parent, and a child of mine showed any powerful inclination to follow a direction likely to land him later on into difficulties, I would push him deliberately along it, until in sheer disgust — and youth is naturally very clean — he cried aloud to turn back. To "stuff" oneself with the Forbidden Fruits is often the most direct method to cease to desire any more. To nibble at them furtively is to imagine we enjoy the taste, besides making us imagine ourselves the gayest of gay "dogs" for doing so. If you must eat of them, it is better to eat of them to over-repletion; since, otherwise, they become like caviare — a "treat," not because we like it, but because it is so expensive and so rare, and because, tasting it so rarely, and procuring it with so much difficulty, we imagine that it MUST BE good. But sometimes a period of unthinking extravagance is the best ultimate economy in the end. It teaches us that the things which, for the most part, are out of our reach, are not necessarily nicer because they are beyond our grasp, but in

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reality are not nearly so pleasant in the long run as the things by which we really have to live.

Nothing in the world of vice is so ugly that repression will not make it more so.

SOME CONFESSIONS

The Danger of Carving Images

WE like to pretend that we love people for the purity of their "soul"; for the greatness of their intellect; for the high moral motives which inspire their actions through life. But very often the truth is that we are drawn towards them more by their physical beauty, the straightness of their limbs, the clearness of their eyes, the way they smile at us, their fascinating mannerisms — a dozen purely outward charms that have nothing whatever to do with spiritual, moral, or intellectual altitude.

And this is the reason of so many unaccountable friendships, so many inexplicable love affairs, so many unreasonable likes and dislikes, the cause of so much extraordinary indifference. It is also the reason why absence does not make the heart grow fonder, contrary to all romantic pretence. It is the reason why two people, once deeply in love, become bored by each other — familiarity has bred staleness. The man who first carved out of wood and stone the image of his God risked a very great deal. It is far wiser

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to leave an ideal disembodied. The man to whom a woman is most faithful, is the man she has never yet met. And the same axiom applies to men.

SOME CONFESSIONS

The Long-ago of Yesterday

NOTHING seems quite so old-fashioned as the fashion which is just out-of-date. A "hobble skirt," or the point of view before August 1914, seems to speak of an age more distant than the crinoline or Solomon. So it is with our own life, with our own memories. As we look back down the long procession of dead years — our life seems as a tale that is told to us by some one else. We find it so hard to believe that we actually lived in those days which now seem such centuries ago; that the young man crooning poetry to the girl he loves was really us; that the timid fearful boy who dreamed away the hours pretending to work in an office, was somebody we once knew well, not actually the young man from whom we have ourselves evolved. Queen Elizabeth seems somehow nearer to us of the present day than King George IV or Queen Victoria. The days of our childhood; the days of our adolescence — they seem to speak of incidents analogous with Ancient Rome. Life seems very short — too short!

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yet the "romances" of Yesterday seem æons ago. Can they really have occurred to us? Or were they all part and parcel of a dream? Today seems real enough. But even between ourselves and Yesterday there seems to have fallen a curtain, so that as we remember it — ourselves and Yesterday — it is as if we remembered something alien to our own experience.

SOME CONFESSIONS

*When we may proudly call Ourselves
“Charming”*

THE discovery that we possess Charm is, as it were, the birthday present which old Father Time presents to a man and a woman on their forty-fifth birthday. Many young people like to believe that they are charming, when, in reality, their attraction is merely the attraction of youth and health, of pretty ankles, a classical profile, or the elegant way in which fashionable clothes hang upon their “fashionably shaped” bodies. But nobody can with truth preen themselves on their charm until that allurement which belongs primarily to sex has waned, or become recognizably indistinct. If we are popular at forty-five — then we must indeed possess an attractive personality. For to be really and truly charming must be for what we *ARE*, not for what we *LOOK*. Charm is surely a unique quality of the mind; otherwise, why not call it by its proper name — a name which infers something entirely different from any mental or moral virtue, and is shared in by the animals also.

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The Angry Art of Plain Speaking

I WONDER why it is that people who love to speak the truth, as the truth, they believe, has been revealed to them, always make it the excuse for being extremely rude? "I am a blunt man," they say, just as if a blunt man were any more desirable than a blunt knife! I suppose it is because the truth is generally spoken when the truth-sayer is in a temper. There is nothing like breakfast-time for the revelation of subconscious irritations. The downright person, the person who always says what he thinks and is never afraid to say it, is rarely so happy as when he comes right down on somebody's pet corn. To some people corns are simply there to be stamped upon. And the more their victims yell, the louder they tell them that they shouldn't have worn tight boots in the first instance. As if everybody had not their own little pet vanities, vanities which they have to pay dearly for, without other people sending in their own account rendered! But that is the worst of deliberate truth-tellers. They always carry out their con-

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victions as if they themselves were above reproach. Personally, I don't at all mind hearing the honest truth, providing I may be allowed to give utterance to my own ideas regarding it in return. But this is where the majority of people who pride themselves on never "beating about the bush" fail one. They hate their own "bushes" to be disturbed. But the only way to deal with people who will insist upon telling you what they think of you is to tell them what you think of them, in the first instance, if possible. It may mean a quarrel, or it may end in a life-long friendship, but, at any rate, you start the future from a common level, and to be on a common level, and to know it, is the only way by which a man may help his brother man upward and be helped by him in return. But if there be any one quality necessary to reach this common starting-point, it is a sense of humour, without which no personal relationship which pretends to honesty can survive the first smart of plain speaking. For a sense of humour is so much more than its name implies. In many ways it is but another way of describing a sense of proportion, since real humour must see the funny side of every argument, and there is no subject on earth which cannot become ridiculous when faith

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in it is driven to excess, and when it is treated as if it alone, in all heaven and earth, were the only thing that ever has, or ever will, really matter.

SOME CONFESSIONS

The Extortionate Fees Demanded by Experience

OH, the utter uselessness of ever following other people's advice! In this life, wherein there is so much pure chance, the worst advice at the moment may turn out the best advice in the long run. On the other hand, the best advice — which is usually along the "safety line" — may quite easily land one in a perfect maze of complications, besides adding to our loneliness and to our unseen tears.

But, in any case, both good as well as bad advice is ours for nothing and at any time. People love to give advice — it makes them feel so superior, and is infinitely less fatiguing than sympathy. The great difficulty, however, is to follow any kind of advice which runs counter to our own desires. The amount of advice given and neglected every day, would tell a story of "wastefulness" of which the later history of the present Government's economy (1922) would read like an essay on spendthrift extravagance. As a matter of fact, I believe that, among all the

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people who ask advice — and some people are never tired of demanding it — comparatively few have any serious intention of following it, whatever it may be — especially should it run contrary to their own selfishness. When people ask advice, it is usually a desire to listen to another's confirmation of their own decisions.

Experience is perhaps the wisest counsellor of all. Alas! that very often his fees are terribly extortionate. Moreover, you can rarely hand on the fruits of your own experience. Which, perhaps, is just as well, since the wisdom you have learned through bitter trials may quite easily prove foolishness when applied to the affairs of another. Some people can escape consequences so easily, and most people hope they will be counted among the lucky ones. So they go ahead — and trust to catch God napping. After all, we all have to make one big blunder; fools only repeat it.

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Our Self-worked Limelight

“SHOULD a woman tell?” I can remember there was a play which used to be performed on the music-halls bearing that title. If I remember rightly, the woman did tell — and there was a lot of trouble in consequence. Personally, I don’t see why any of us should say anything about our “past.” Our “past” is our own affair. Only on one consideration should a woman, or for that matter a man, lay bare the innermost secrets of their dead yesterday — that is when there is a strong likelihood of the full story being revealed anyway. A trouble faced squarely is a trouble which can be conquered. It is only when we flee from the inevitable that it pursues us relentlessly, making us suffer the more acutely in direct ratio to our cowardice. But when there is no reasonable likelihood of the Dead Past being resurrected, I can see no earthly reason why anybody should deliberately raise it up to demand forgiveness for it. And demand forgiveness for it they always do — the men and women who will insist upon relating the full

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story of their lives. That is, perhaps, why they like to tell it. I always think that a woman's favourite Biblical picture is the one in which Mary Magdalene comes to Christ and is pardoned her past trespasses. Love is a strange mixture of ecstasy and sheer grovelling. And some only seem to find ecstasy when lying prone in the dust. They yearn to be loved for themselves alone, not realizing that to be loved is to be worshipped as a symbol, not at all to be looked up to as an unadorned fact. So long as we can preserve that symbolism, just so long will we be loved. Most people prefer the Truth respectably dressed; seen naked, nine out of every ten blush at the sight and turn away. So it behoves a woman to keep the truth about herself well draped in metaphorical *crêpe-de-chine*. After all, she won't get the real unvarnished truth, even though her lover does profess to tell her his life-story from beginning to end. It is human always, as it were, to smooth the edges and round the corners of our personal biography. And why not? In our private lives, what may look to another as an acute angle of wilful wickedness, may in reality have been such a gradual curve that we were round the bend long before we realized that our action did not

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lie along the straight, straight line. What is not known is always forgiven. So long as we do not forgive ourselves, we may count our past failings unto our soul as virtue, since by them it is cleansed and strengthened. But why, all the same, make a song about them? It is our own affair. No one, not even those who love us — perhaps those who love us least of all — has the right to demand explanations, or expect explanations concerning the present and the future. He who is jealous of "yesterday" will likely prove a most unstable companion tomorrow.

And yet, there are lots of women who do not seem to be really content until they have confessed every single kiss they have ever received to the men they love, men who I am sure inwardly hate listening to their confession. They are always wanting to be "converted" through love, and have their sins washed away, if not in public, at least before some kind of an audience. It affords no satisfaction to a man to learn from the lips of the girl he adores that she has been as "weak" as he has. He wants to find his own salvation through his belief in her strength. When she won't allow him to believe in her, he hates her, not for what she is, but for the

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idol she has destroyed. Moreover, she also endangers her own salvation, since to know that some one we love believes in us is the finest incentive to become worthy of such a faith. We undermine so many things when once we seek to destroy the illusion which surrounds them.

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The Sailing of the “Quest”

WHEN the *Quest* sailed, I wonder now many hearts went with it on its voyage towards the Unknown? I don't mean with the crew, of course, but with the ship itself. So many of us are longing to “get away.” Not many of us know quite where we want to go to, but we do yearn for fresh scenes, fresh faces; we do long to get right away from the weary turmoil which some call “civilization”; we do long to begin all over again in some far-off land where there may be peace and where we like to believe that we will find happiness and rest. The “daily round and common task”—how “common” the task seems, and how tired we are of the continuity of the daily round! The War broke up our lives as well as our hearts, and in the Peace which followed there seems to be no peace, only more bickering, more jealousy and selfishness, more rumours of more wars and equal misery — though of a different kind — as when the War was in progress and the Armistice something too glorious and wonderful even to linger over in our day-dreams. Something seems

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to have gone awry with the world of men, so that the only life worth living appears to be life on a desert island, where there is simply Nature and Silence, and where God, as in the Garden of Eden, will wander in the cool of the evening. And so when the *Quest* set sail, the hearts of many men went with it in imagination longingly, and thousands envied the crew — not so much the hardships which lay in front of them, but for the respite from those worries of modern life which seem to overwhelm more and more the happiness which should be ours.

Strange it is how difficult happiness is to find! The animals find it quite easily. They only ask for food and liberty and a companion to share their wonder and their curiosity in the beauty and strangeness of the world around them. Personally, I don't think that any of us are really happy until we are quite, quite simple. The simplest life is generally the happiest, and the simple pleasures are nearly always those pleasures the memory of which falls like a benediction on our troubled spirit. And yet, all of us seem to avoid simplicity as if it were a sign of failure, or something to be avoided with shame. We pretend to ourselves and to others far too much. Many of us are always pretending. We seem

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afraid of being natural, for fear that, being natural, we shall not at the same time look dignified. As if a bolstered-up dignity impressed anyone except a fool! We seem incapable of finding happiness for ourselves, but must always strive to emulate the happiness of those whom we like to believe are more fortunate. And so, instead of enjoying every moment of life and health, we exist, for the most part, as if consciousness were not something splendid and wonderful, but merely a state to make the best of, a kind of dull stepping-stone towards that resplendent Tomorrow of our hopes — which, oh, so rarely dawns!

How often am I exasperated when I consider how much I have to earn, how many long hours I have to work, simply to keep a roof over my head and fill my body with food — most of which gives me indigestion! When my hours of play arrive, I am usually too weary to enjoy them. So I sink into a kind of dull lethargy, or go to a theatre, or play a game; do anything, in fact, merely to get away from myself. A far less luxurious roof, and infinitely less rich food, would still enable me to live in comfort; but were I to find them I should have to go and live in the depths of the country or in the slums, or,

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what to me would be far worse, the suburbs. Incidentally, too, I should lose quite a number of friendly acquaintances, who would hate to share my simple repasts and shudder at my surroundings. So, like many other fools, I sacrifice too much of my life in order to exhibit a comfort which really brings me no pleasure commensurate with its expenses. And this expensive and generally tiresome artificiality blights nearly all the joy in life. We have grown to believe that Happiness is an expensive thing — something outside ourselves which has to be paid for. And the more expensive it is, the greater pleasure we are told it offers us. Only when it is too late; only when we have made for ourselves a rut, the walls of which are too high for any but the bravest to scale, do we realize in secret that Happiness lay, not in front of us, but around us all the time — among the simple and most human desires of our hearts. So when the *Quest* set sail, many of us longed to travel with her on the high seas. Something new; something strange; some perilous adventure — anything in fact, except this kind of batter-pudding-with-wearisome-sauce which, unconsciously maybe, we have allowed our over-vaunted civilization to make of our Little Day.

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Time-clipped Wings

THE older we grow the easier we take root wherever we happen to be; not only that, but the easier we forge our own daisy-chains and imagine they are unbreakable ties. It matters not that many of these roots and most of these chains are of the stuff of which procrastination is made. Procrastination is often as irresistible as direct force, and much pleasanter to battle against. And there's the rub! For, as we grow older, pleasant things, especially if they be at the same time peaceful, attract us more and more, until at last breakfast in bed (a thing I loathe, but no matter) lures us more effectively than any siren's "call" from the distant hills. So our flights of fancy become at last merely dream voyages, the while our body is comfortably reclining in the easiest chair which it is our blessing to possess. It is not that most of us are unwilling; on the contrary, many of us live in full mental preparation to cast all aside and adventure into the Unknown. The trouble is that, as we grow older, our only activity is

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mental — the body is always putting off until to-morrow what it is so disturbing to do to-day. Perhaps it is better so. Yet, all the same, the thought haunts us that, if this life of ours be all, we have done precious little with it; the world is wide, and we have only seen one little dusty corner; the earth is peopled by many interesting people, yet we have only collected around us a company of bores — more or less. “We will away,” we say to ourselves, at the same time drawing up our easy chair nearer to the fireside. “We will cast aside every tie that really is no tie at all, but merely a habit with a blue ribbon on it, and we will go out to seek the Adventure of Life!” And all the time we are, metaphorically speaking, scanning the clock, waiting for that moment when the maid will bring us our last hot whisky, without which we believe we could not possibly go to bed and dream — say of angels! The spirit is willing enough; it is the body which is such an unconscionable sluggard. Our hearts may still dream as they dreamed when we were twenty-one, but so many of us are fifteen at heart and fifty-five in the legs — and that is the great “curse” of growing old and sedate. Otherwise it has manifold advantages, not the least of which is no

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fearful hankering after life — just for the sake of living.

If only we might be sentenced to death occasionally we really might then learn to enjoy ourselves — the sentence to be carried out unless we deliberately climbed out of our groove and set forth to reach some undiscovered country. The War blew most people's "banks" sky high, and, looking back upon that period, after nearly four years of peace one is bound to confess that, not only was life much more like life should be then, but men and women were more like what men and women should be, too! With death so near at hand, there was no time left to make pretence any longer. We simply had to seize the moments, leaden or golden, whichever they happened to be, and live them to their full. We lived for the most part as if there would likely be no to-morrow, and so we lived through to-day as ardently as we were able. We forgot such things as conventionality and "the thing," our snobbish ambitions, and the eternal struggle to make more and more money, simply because there was no time to remember them. We were forced to be real — one cannot be otherwise within the shadow of death — and because we became more real we were infinitely

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more interesting, more natural, less encrusted by the sugar-coating of things-which-are-respectable-but-do-not-matter. And this is what we always do become when once we break away from the confines of that groove which unconsciously we make for ourselves. All the same, why I call it a "groove" I know not. It is far more like a pit when once you try to climb out of it. And unless something happens like a world war, few people ever do climb out at all. They are, in reality, dead and buried long before the earth at last covers their remains. And sometimes they know it, and sometimes they do not. The tragic figures, however, are those who, knowing it, are too fearful to make an attempt. And how well I know that kind of fear. It has been my one great bugbear all my life through. Fear of what? I do not exactly know. Fear of to-morrow? Perhaps. How stupid! True! But what a very common failing, alas!

How ceaselessly the Cosy and the Comfortably-off shake their heads at the inability of so many people to "settle down" since the War. They are full of forebodings regarding their future. They imply that this state of restlessness is surely prompted by that little bit of the devil which is in all of us — that little bit of the

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devil which invariably tempts us to cock a snook at any angel from heaven the moment her back is turned. Personally, I have always a sneaking sympathy for those who cannot go back to the kind of life they lived before August, 1914. You can't bring people suddenly face to face with the profundities of existence and then expect them to find satisfaction in its tawdry artificialities. You cannot willingly stand on a mountain-top and then descend to snuggle dully within some stuffy little niche. Having lived life vitally for a time, it is difficult to return to the stiff white collar of conventional existence and become a hard-working, respectable business automaton. The War shattered every kind of "pretence," and it is well-nigh impossible to go on pretending when once you have perceived its absurdity. Life is too short, and so the effort does not seem worth while. But that perhaps is why — essential to your own salvation though it be — it is dangerous for most men and women to escape the groove. They can never return.

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Carnival

FOR some years past there have been efforts — entirely vain, for the most part — to introduce the continental carnival into England. One might just as well try to introduce Punch and Judy into the Church Congress. The earnest churchman could not possibly view such an introduction with greater hostility than did the “respectable” inhabitants of those seaside resorts where the Carnival was organized in the belief that it would amuse and entertain the visitors and residents. True, the inhabitants hung out a few flags, and the shop-windows displayed bags of confetti, paper roses and sundry grotesque masks: but underneath this faint display of universal conviviality, there surged a spirit of resentment. Such a thing as a carnival was considered to be alien to the British way of enjoying itself. We may not be professing Puritans in these days, but a nation can’t go through some centuries of Puritanism without austerity entering into its soul, freezing the spontaneity of its natural frivolity. The only

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means by which the average Englishman can be made to forget his own decorum is to become half-drunk. In fact, the English carnivals that I have visited were perfectly symbolized in the figures of middle-aged men, in an advanced stage of intoxication, wearing paper caps. They were invariably the centre of an unflattering attention — except from small boys. Yet they were the nearest approach to the carnival spirit anywhere around. For the rest, its main interest lay in the fact that the small children of the poor streets anticipated Guy Fawkes Day by decking themselves up in paper streamers and penny masks, demanding the passers-by to "spare a copper" — which, in parenthesis, most of them gave them, since it is a curious fact about passers-by that they will always find a penny for a child and pass by the blind and the maimed and the halt without so much as a look. Beyond the children hardly anybody seemed to be enjoying himself who was, at the same time, sober. A furtive, hang-dog kind of air seemed to pervade the crowd. It was as if it had been asked to be "naughty" and had not found it very "nice," contrary to all expectation. The few who seemed determined to enjoy themselves somehow and at all costs, were simply noisy and

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not in the least an embodiment of the *joie de vivre*. The majority viewed their exhibition of horseplay with curiosity mingled with contempt. They looked as if such antics were a kind of slur upon their own habitual conduct: their expression was of one whose inner yearning is to go quietly home and let who will be giddy. I know not which was more depressing — the revellers or the revilers. It was as gay as a mock funeral without a corpse.

What the organizers of these carnivals seemed to have forgotten was the fact that you can no more transplant a nation's amusements successfully than you can transplant a nation's national heroes. They lose all character, all their significance when transferred to alien soil. Each nation enjoys itself in its own way. A mutual appreciation of such enjoyments among themselves is as impossible to discover as a mutual appreciation of their individual senses of humour. The spirit of Carnival will never be a popular spirit in England, for the simple reason that the average Englishman observes strictly only two Commandments—the Eleventh, which we all know, and the Twelfth which runs: “Thou shalt not appear ridiculous in the eyes of thy neighbour.” Only when he is intoxicated

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can an Englishman so far forget himself as to ignore that latter injunction. He is too self-conscious to be a daylight reveller. The old puritanical outlook still keeps watch over his actions, paralysing their exuberance. He cannot outgrow that ancient belief which considered every sign of wild enjoyment to be instigated by the Evil One. And, in his case, it very often is. For, as a rule, there is nothing quite so coarse, quite so unattractive, as the average Englishman striving to amuse himself in a continental fashion. Where a Southerner can be witty and child-like in his inconsequential happiness, an Englishman is only obscene and "monkeyish." He is as unpleasing as every one is who is living totally outside his own element. In his proper sphere, however, he enjoys himself quite as much as any other man. His amusements are different — that is all. Such things as the "crowning of King Carnival," "beauty competitions," parades of mannequins in bathing costumes, battles of flowers, are not for him. He will go to see them, but his inner criticism is shown by the secret contempt he feels for those who willingly enter into them. He would far sooner see a county football match or watch a real king pass, or see a parade of boxers, or have a good fight on his

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own account in a side street with his enemy. And his womenfolk are much the same — though an Englishwoman can more easily enter into the atmosphere of revelry, since her spirits are buoyed up to the necessary pitch by the fact that, in fancy dress, she is probably looking very pretty. An Englishman in fancy dress always feels himself an “ass,” and is made the more uncomfortable by the fact that he feels he also ought to be “gay” and “wicked.” He can, of course, be both; but his greatest difficulty is to combine them successfully, to all outside appearances, without being drunk.

Foreigners, when they visit England, think we are, as a nation, depressed and serious, because we do not enjoy ourselves in their way. Watch a football crowd, and, except for the wild outburst of cheering on occasion, it is the most deadly assembly of depressing exteriors imaginable. But though there is no laughter, and but a few coarse jests, every one in the crowd is intensely happy. If you gave it bags of paper flowers and paper caps and told it to throw the one and don the other it would do so, but in a far less contented state of mind. There is dignity in sport, but there is no dignity in childishness — at least, if there is, the average Eng-

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lishman fails to see it. The old spirit of Puritanism is ineradicable, or maybe it is simply our climate. In either case, the fact remains that, deep down in the Englishman's heart, there lurks the belief that anything appertaining to the spirit of Carnival is a direct encouragement to sin, and that though the directors of it may be the Mayor and Corporation, the Devil is nevertheless sitting with them at the board of council. Alcohol alone can deaden his self-questioning. That is why the introduction of anything approaching the continental forms of gaiety quickly degenerates into horse-play and licence on this side of the Channel. The average London Night Club is among the most depressing things I know. An English prostitute is usually a dull and tragic figure. To watch the average Englishman dance is to regard an almost solemn ecstasy. Give him, however, some duty to perform, and he will perform it hilariously. The Great War was the nearest approach to a continental carnival that the present generation is ever likely to see in England. A state funeral is an anticipated event. It is hopeless to fashion the amusements of English people to any standards but their own. They do enjoy themselves as much as any other nation, but their enjoy-

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ment is not infectious. The Englishman regards his pastimes as seriously as he guards his home. He cannot mingle gracefully with his fellow-men in any circumstances which seem at war with his dignity. His ways are his own ways — and they are consequently the best ways for him. Let other nations pretend to fulfil the Ten Commandments — an Englishman reserves his practical devotion only to the Eleventh and Twelfth—

“Thou shalt not be found out.”

“Thou shalt not appear ridiculous in the eyes of thy neighbour.”

Fulfilling these two, he can enjoy himself enormously. Ask him to ignore them — he will obey in shame or in drink. It is a waste of enthusiasm to expect him to disobey them otherwise. He is an Englishman. He knows exactly what he likes. Only in an atmosphere of impending danger is he whole-heartedly jocose.

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The “Pompous” and the “Mere”

YOU jeer, perhaps, at pomposity. I envy it. I don't want to be pompous all the time, but to be pompous on occasion is a most valuable asset to possess. “Pomposity” signifies success. It is all very well to be modest and humble and inherit all those other peaceful virtues which people habitually tread on, but a little “pomposity” goes a long way in the estimation of many people — not the people who count, perhaps, but the people who make up a crowd and seem to achieve no other individual destiny. “Pomp and circumstance” — the majority of men adore them! They may pretend to laugh at them, but their applause gives the lie direct to their sense of humour. Politicians know that. It is the reason why eloquence and a good platform presence can successfully hide so much sly cunning. Kings know it too; and so do Statesmen; so even do Communists when they unfurl their red flag and scream “liberty”! “Pomposity” is the kind of gilded symbol of achievement, and can hide the truth when there

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has been no real achievement whatsoever. A “commanding figure” uttering “bosh” how readily we are all inclined to cheer him to the echo, while we ignore the worm-like creature who is speaking common sense. We all like to imagine ourselves members of some grand procession, and if we can’t be in it, the next best thing is to watch it. But a procession is nearly always a “goose-step”—that is, it looks so impressive, but nobody quite knows why it should march thus, waving banners and following anything from a golden casket to a human being dressed up to look like a figure in a transformation scene. It would seem as if we must always dress our faith up and present it with a golden crown and a magic wand. Disguised to look all-powerful, we are quite content ourselves to resemble something all-doormat. We profess not to worship idols, but few of us are content until we have made for ourselves something extraordinarily like a graven image. We do not realize until much later that most symbols represent dead ideals.

Even in our intimacies we like our friends to look important — though maybe they are of not the slightest consequence to the common weal. Clothes were evolved, I believe, in order that

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many of us might look more impressive than we naturally are. The more solemn the occasion the more solemn becomes our garb. At the Day of Judgment many men will be apologetic for not appearing in a top-hat. We like to show our "gala" spirit by putting on black ties, or, if we are female, reduce our dress to a minimum during some of the chilliest hours of the twenty-four. A woman with a diamond necklace secretly pities the other woman who can only tie a velvet ribbon round her neck. The be-diamonded woman has realized the advantage of being pompous. For "pomposity," I take it, is that "dramatic effect" which prevents the mind realizing that there is no real drama. As Mr. Festing Jones says in his delightful book "Mount Eryx," it is our "Poesia," our conscious or unconscious elaboration of the Real in the hope that some one may mistake it for the miraculous. We cannot stick to the Naked Truth about ourselves. We must always hanker after having a fig-leaf designed by Reville and Rossiter. If we represent an Ideal, we instinctively strive to represent it in our appearance — as near to some deity recently descended from Olympus as we are able. It is, of course, very amusing to watch, but it makes progress often

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rather tiring, since “ pomposity ” is offended if it be not treated pompously. And there’s the rub. For so much valuable time is wasted on the etiquette of approach that the real work in hand often becomes a pleasant phantom seen from afar off. The “ dignity of our position ” — how often we forget to analyse our position in the effort to keep up our dignity. And, laughable though it be often, impressiveness can sometimes carry off an uncertain situation. That is why I envy it — even though it often makes me smile. People are disappointed if the object they admire falls short of the ideal it represents. The world pretends to despise ceremony, but in reality it adores it. The “ voice crying in the wilderness ” might just as well remain mute. What we really like, what really stirs our very “ soul,” is a man screaming through a megaphone in the Albert Hall, with lots of people in their best clothes sitting on the platform, a limelight thrown on the speaker as if it were a direct ray from Heaven, and front seats round about four guineas apiece. What is said doesn’t matter. We have had a thrilling evening. Everybody looked their part to perfection. That is all that matters! And yet one hears and reads a great deal about the glory of being suc-

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cessful, rich, powerful and lovely; but very little about the utter peacefulness of being "mere." And yet the inner satisfaction of being merely "mere" is very great when you sit down to seriously consider its many blessings. To be "mere" carries with it no responsibility, and that in itself is an enormous benefit. Nobody asks of the merely mere people to be anything except what they are not. But to be rich and successful, powerful and lovely, puts one on a pedestal above the crowd, and to be on a pedestal is to provide an admirable target, while "target," in parentheses, is an admirable symbol of the situation of those who stand out from the common ruck. And the worst of being on a pedestal is that you've got to stop there all the time for your own safety. The eyes of the multitude are upon you, and you can never get away from them for a moment. Your only chance then of gaining the restfulness of a lower level is to do something disgraceful, when you not only descend, but you are trampled under foot into the mud. This never happens to the "mere" man. He can go on his way rejoicing, undisturbed by any outside attention, whether it be praise, blame or merely acidulated burlesque. Nobody takes any interest in him whatsoever.

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Thus he knows the blessed situation of complete anonymity — or as near to anonymity as anyone can get in this world where most men have one eye on the main chance and the other on their neighbours. Moreover, mediocrity is much less lonely than greatness. A great man is usually the more alone because so many people are buzzing around him, trying to share in the rewards of his greatness; his entourage is too often composed entirely of flatterers on the one hand, and bitter enemies on the other — a distressing combination at any time. But the mediocre man can pick and choose his friends among other mediocre men, happy in the knowledge that he will be asked to bolster up no losing cause, nor have his private life pried into for the relaxation of the reading public. He just passes on his way from one milestone of life to another — ignored, and if he be wise, ignoring.

And believe me, it is easier to assume a kind of imitation greatness than it is to resign yourself happily to being actually “mere.” Most people lose half the happiness which could be theirs, in their efforts to obtain something which lies beyond their reach. Ambition, power, success, beauty, carry with them — if I may so express it — their own special concentrated dose

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of salts of lemon. Very few of the great ones of this earth look happy. Have you noticed that? They have a reputation to keep up — and that always means a miserable effort. Their greatness leaves them no peace. They are always either spurring themselves onward toward a higher elevation, or fighting those below them to keep the footing they have already obtained. Thank goodness! no one can push anybody off the lowest level. It is his “for keeps” — unless he is foolish enough to attempt to “go up higher.” You may find contentment on the level, whereas there is no such thing as peace on a pedestal. Moreover, a man on the level can wander where he wishes, and nobody, having noticed him, desires to say him nay. But there is no such thing as anonymity in greatness. Even though it is clever enough to lead a “double life,” be sure its biographer will one day find it out. No, we usually suffer far more from our “outstanding qualities” than from those commonplace virtues at which nobody throws either a bouquet or a brick-bat. So loudly and so long have power and success, beauty and wealth, been dinned into us as blessings after which all should strive, that mediocrity shuffles along with its coat collar turned up,

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and its chin deeply buried within its folds. And yet, without mediocrity there could be no such thing as super-humanity. In a world entirely composed of supermen there would be no *raison d'être* for anybody to strive at all. A handful of suet is a nasty thing, but you can't make a plum pudding without it; and although, still to keep within a culinary metaphor, the currants may "fancy themselves," a cake made entirely of currants would be a horrible compound to digest. So let us keep some Songs of Praise for the Commonplace and Ordinary. They may not inherit the fairy palaces of this earth, but they do pay the majority of the taxes. And a special pæan should be sung for those who, being both commonplace and ordinary, make no dreary attempts to be otherwise.

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On Hostesses who lose Touch with their Own Parties

SO many hostesses give entertainments at which they could not possibly be expected to enjoy themselves. The result is failure almost invariably. And these hostesses are left wondering whatever went wrong with their good intentions, and why they are thankful when they are over, and what gives them that haunting feeling that their guests were also filled by the self-same satisfaction. Personally, I always take it as an axiom that if you don't enjoy your own "parties" none of your guests ever will. The sight of a strained and anxious hostess is like the breath of cold air on an omelette — the only quality which makes it delicious has vanished. Of course, I realize that there are two kinds of social entertainments. There are those which are arranged purely and solely so that the hostess and her guests may enjoy themselves; there are those which, to put it metaphorically, are merely designed to wipe off old debts in one. These, of course, are not, strictly speaking, entertainments at all, but merely "receipts" or even "accounts rendered," and you file them in

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your memory with all the other dull things you can think of. But the hostess who has really discovered her true genre is a rare bird. So many women seem ambitious to entertain beyond their means — I don't mean financially, so much as intellectually. They lose hold of their own position as hostess, and either become mere figure-heads at the top of a staircase or else the centre of a small crowded corner with every one else looking for them in vain. The hostess who loses touch with her own party is the hostess who gives among the dullest in the social round. And how many such there are! They begin admirably and afterwards spend the rest of the time frantically trying to connect loose ends. They are unhappy themselves, and they spread their own perturbation among their guests. The result is that their dinner-parties degenerate into something approaching the dullness of semi-public affairs; their luncheon-parties equally as un-intimate; even their tea-parties are less restful than one partaken in a city café. Their own strained efforts inflict their guests with the same longing for escape as does a long railway journey along with some one whose only friendly link is that he "knew your mother when she was a young girl."

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I suppose the real reason why so many of us echo whole-heartedly the remark of the French philosopher who said "Life might be enjoyable if it were not for its pleasures" is that few of us make sufficiently determined efforts not to know the wrong people. We are all so ready to know anybody; but the worst of getting to know people is that one has got to keep on knowing them, or turn them into enemies more or less. Some, the more misguided ones it seems to me, are only content when they have the reputation for knowing everybody. But the person who knows everybody is generally the one whom it is no gratification to get to know. They collect names as some people collect stamps, and when they entertain, it is as if they sent invitations to view an exhibit. But if there is anything more boring than a visit to an exhibition, I should not like to go. Nevertheless, there are certain hostesses who seem born with a gift of organizing crowds. They marshal their guests like a regiment. They shine the most resplendent in the center of a surging mass. But these women are not really hostesses. They are directors of massed forces. The born hostess is she who can envelop her guests in her own personality, in her own happiness, her own point of

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view. Because she, herself, is happy among her friends, her friends are happy to be with her. It is a social gift, moreover, which can be cultivated in both rich and poor alike. And it is a very precious and a very enviable gift, too. Not sufficient due is ever given to those who radiate the happiness of their own friendly feelings. But unless a hostess can radiate her own friendliness among her guests, her entertainments are never really successful. It is popularly supposed that the host is the last person who should expect to enjoy his own parties. But, if he doesn't, be sure nobody else will. So the wise host only gives those entertainments which he really enjoys himself. And in enjoying them he will, all unconsciously perhaps, make them enjoyable. That is why the "passing of the great Edwardian hostesses" — so poignant a regret in books of middle-aged memoirs — leaves the modern generation quite chilly. The modern hostess only asks her guests to do what they like, while she does what she likes. And where people are doing what they like, they, of course, like what they do. So the result is a reputation for entertaining which no retreat of beauty or advance of fat can destroy.

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On Getting into Society

IT was, I think, John Oliver Hobbes who said that “People spend half their lives trying to get into society and the rest of the time in trying to get out of it.” Personally, I loathe all society, whether it is spelt with a big capital S or a quite teeny-weeny one. But then, I’m afraid I have misanthropic tendencies, and so am no judge of the satisfaction of knowing a lot of people, few of whom have any overwhelming desire to know me. Yet I have talked to many people whose acknowledged ambition it has been to be considered members of Society — with a gigantic S — and I have found them a very weary, disillusioned brigade. Most of them seem to have achieved their ambition, only to discover that it meant merely to be bored on a grand scale. The others found a never ending satisfaction in being bracketed with the Best People — even though the Best People only condescended to recognize that “bracket” on a purely take-without-giving basis, *i.e.* in exchange for lavish entertainments, or any other rare and

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particular advantage that might be offered to them. Nevertheless, I am always wondering wherein lies the satisfaction of struggling to get to know people who have not the least desire to know you! I suppose it belongs to that "kink" in human nature which, when it finds a locked door, immediately imagines that what lies on the other side must necessarily be far more wonderful than what lies on this. They are the things that we do not possess which seem to us to be the very things we want the most. And so it is with society. Those who are "out of it" want to get in it, and those who are in it are mostly bored to death with their position. Perhaps the happiest are those who, after long struggling and much expense, eventually buy themselves a position "on the fringe." People who live "on the fringe" are always buoyed up by hope. For example, those who live in Mayfair are usually far less insistent on having that locality on their note-paper than those who, merely living in the cleaner parts of Pimlico, insist upon calling it "Lower Belgravia." (This, of course, does not apply to Park Lane, since Park Lane is always socially suspect; so many of its denizens — dowager-countesses and courtesans — are here to-day gloriously, and may be anywhere

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to-morrow. They are just Bayswater with its “ship” come in.)

And yet, I sometimes ask myself if social climbers may not be quite modest people after all. There can be no pride in grovelling, and the yearning to know people who show no interest in knowing you belongs to a less egotistical spirit than the one which refuses to be known by anybody save those whom it particularly desires to know. The dog, for instance, wags its tail to obtain your kind attention — but no one could call the dog a “snob.” The real “snob” rather is the cat, who will condescend to be stroked when it feels inclined and ignores you utterly when it is in no purring mood. So these social climbers wag their tails, and bring myrrh and incense in the hope that those whose smiles they covet may permit them to lick their boots in public. But the real “snob” is surely he who believes he is conferring a favour when he allows his boots to be licked! The “lickers” themselves belong rather to the great “lackey” family of the world — whose ambition is to serve. After all, let every man and woman have their own ambitions, and, if that ambition is to get to know the “best people” — well, their efforts all add to the farcical element of life. No

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one is really impressed by their successes — but their antics do very often make us laugh, and, personally, I am ready to forgive anybody anything provided that they add to my entertainment. So perhaps the greatest “snob” of all is he who picks and chooses his own society — welcoming into the social circle of which he, himself, is the centre, everybody who adds to his enjoyment, and cold-shouldering literally nobody except those belonging to the monstrous army of bores. Merely to get to know people in a better social “set” than your own may be a puerile ambition, but it is essentially harmless. It is puerile because, when they arrive there, they receive no additional intellectual or moral or any other satisfaction. The same percentage of bores is to be found in every class of society. At best their triumph consists in being able to flaunt their “visiting list” in the faces of those whose friends, on paper, appear infinitely less imposing. It is not, of course, a laudable proceeding — because so silly. It resembles the action of a cook who flourishes her new hat in the face of the scullery-maid. The cook, by her action, shows that, in spite of her new hat, she is really in heart and “soul” entirely of the “kitchen”; so the social climber proves by his

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climbing that, in reality, he is only a consummate bore, forcing his way into places where he is not especially wanted — the surest sign of a bore among all the many signs they give unconsciously. After all, if the “climbers” were clever, or amusing, or had something really personal and valuable to offer, society would be only too pleased to know them. So perhaps when we meet a social climber we ought not to condemn him, but rather hold him up as an example of such modesty that he resembles nothing so much as a beggar while waiting for the crumbs to fall from the tables of the more fortunate. There is real pathos in the eyes of those who, at Ascot, only gaze discontentedly, like Moses, into the Promised Land — otherwise the royal enclosure.

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Those Whom We Forgive

IN spite of what those novelists say, who write gaudily-covered stories of "pink" passion for "pale spinsters," the Scarlet Sinner in sack-cloth and ashes is far more appealing than she who glories in being worse than she is painted and lives, as it were, a gay life of one "big damn" after another and in the face of all the angels. Messalina, all bounce and bravado, may seem to cut a very striking figure, but she is really an unmitigated bore, unless you happen to be a victim of her allure, in comparison with Magdalen "on the rocks" all tears and tatters, whose child is both a proof of her sin as well as a begging of our pardon. The fact is that Venus, who has just had her hair Marcel-waved, doesn't need anybody's pity, nor anybody's forgiveness. It is only when she returns in poverty and distress that the moral world secretly welcomes her, since surely she is as she has become, simply to teach a lesson — and the most popular moral warnings of all are those which are illustrated by other people.

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I don't know exactly why the signs of repentance should be a body clothed in sackcloth and ashes — but that is by the way. It is no use illustrating it in Russian sables and "cultured" pearls; thus garbed, it is more like an example to be lived up to. Unless the sinner's bosom is heaving convulsively and, from the point of view of *la mode*, she is looking a "perfect sight," neither the reading world, nor the dramatic world, has really the slightest interest in her protestations of reform. We describe her as "hard and unsympathetic," and unless her gay life is brought to a summary and sudden close before the end of the last chapter, or the end of the last act, we feel that morality has been defrauded of its rightful due, and, being ourselves examples of that "due," we close the book, or leave the theatre, with the feeling that the *dénouement* was unsatisfactory and the end unfinished. Magda in her frills and furbelows, her "grand airs," and her expensive hats, left us admiring, but emotionally cold; whereas, when she staggered out of the room to the accompaniment of parental curses, it would seem that she had been beaten, and in her discomfiture had come to us for pity — we, the strict upholders of morality in drama and in fiction, as well as in

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real life. Poor and piteous, she is, as it were, in our power. We feel that, were we able to accord her an invitation, she would be thankful for us to invite her out to tea. Her misery makes us feel superior — and superiority, though it may sound cynical to say so, is seven-tenths of being kind. To see beauty and badness in humiliation at our feet flatters the inhabitants of a world wherein the majority are only half moral, and quite distinctly plain.

But Bold Bad Beauty must not seek our protection until she is quite, quite old. We never truthfully believe the protestations of youth and loveliness while they are young and lovely. But, once let the sinner be without defences, and we are ready to accord her the benefit of present doubts — since to whatever heights she may henceforth soar on repentance and “good deeds,” we realize she will forever be immeasurably behind us. So, as I said before, we are not really interested in the Scarlet Woman until time has faded her colouring and taken the starch out of her pride.

Therefore the writer who makes his heroine not only bad, but prosperous, may afford the illustrator of the outside cover plenty of scope for a design in the primitive colours, but unless

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he brings her to a bad end at last, he has alienated the sympathies of his readers for all time. It says much for human nature that it is always ready to forgive a Loser, whereas a Winner only receives the most hypocritical congratulations. For the one who has lost is worse off than we are ourselves, who have never risked; and to those worse off than ourselves we may forgive much. It is only those who have risked and won who get the moral brickbats hurled at them — since they are the only things left for us to hurl. But the one person we pursue relentlessly is he, or she, who, though unfortunate, does not seek either our pity or listen to our precepts. The person who stands aloof from us — that is the person whom we never really forgive. That is why we never condone a young man's determination to "live his own life." It would seem that his self-determination ignored us completely — and how we hate to be ignored! We manage to forgive every sinner his sin so long as he throws himself upon our mercy, which is only human after all. It is this pleasure of being able to feel superior in some way, which, as it were, makes a show of Christian virtue so often merely a preening of the Christian feathers.

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The Virtue of an Unflattering Mirror

I REMEMBER once talking to a well-known actress who possessed her own theatre, built after her own design. In a room leading out of her dressing-room she had installed an enormous mirror, covering completely one of the walls, and so lit up from above and below that, gazing into it, she could see exactly how she would presently appear on the stage before the public whom she knew were there, not only to criticize her acting, but also to pick all possible holes in her far-famed beauty. It struck me as an excellent idea, and one which might well be copied by nearly every woman in her latter thirties and early forties. It would, to give one example, save many a woman from appearing in pink — that most outrageously treacherous of all colours to a woman no longer in her first bloom of youth. It would prevent her from imagining, also to her own undoing, that how she looks in her mirror, in a room softly shaded by curtains, she will presently appear in that broad light of day — which, like a coarse joke, is so uncompromis-

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ingly broad. Mirrors are lying jades, even those which seem to do their best to make even Venus herself look plain. There is no looking-glass which, if you gaze into it long enough, and especially often enough, will not satisfy you at last by the comforting notion, that, if you don't happen to be beautiful, you don't look so bad, and, at any rate, infinitely more pleasing than the majority. Of course, I don't know whether it be the fault, or the virtue, of the looking-glass, or whether it belongs to that plain woman's comfort — the truth that a familiar face soon loses all ugliness in the eyes of its beholder. It is true that we never see ourselves as other people see us, and this for the simple reason that we can never see ourselves for the first time. It is the first look which counts for beauty and the hundredth for love. But so many women would seem to be more pleased by being admired than by being loved for what they are, or don't happen to be. That is why they will "dress up" for a comparative stranger, and put on most any old thing for a husband. And strangely enough, too, they are not half so furious with the stranger if he doesn't happen to fall down in worship as they are with the husband who ceases to love them!

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Perhaps the wise woman is she who not only changes her mirror often, but changes its position frequently. It is human nature, I suppose, to pull down the metaphorical blind, gaze at oneself in the looking-glass, and rejoice exceedingly that at forty we don't look a day over twenty-nine. And yet, maybe, there is also real wisdom in this, our desire for the flattering illusion. A woman who is under the impression that she is looking her best, will be at her best. Perhaps, deep down in her subconscious self, she realizes that personality is nine-tenths of beauty, and an admirer and a lover are both simply two men she has successfully mesmerized. But you can't mesmerize until you feel that you possess personal power over your victim — and a large percentage of the power of personality springs from a feeling of security and an inner sense of self-satisfaction. Thus a woman satisfied by herself will at the same time satisfy others — a victory which her more retiring, self-depreciating, and timid sister will only attain "once in a blue moon" — and then, for the most part, too late! Thus, if you watch women, you will observe that, whereas a hundred will stop to look at themselves in a mirror hung in a becomingly shaded room, scarcely two out of a

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thousand will rearrange their hat before one of those looking-glasses hanging outside shops, whose relentless honesty is invariably sufficient to scare the most beautiful woman in the world back into her beauty parlour. And yet, the outside mirrors tell us exactly how we look to those outside. So why should we avoid them as if they were an accident in the street? After all, common sense tells us that we should dress up to modify the worst, rather than issue forth as if the sun itself were hidden behind a rose-pink shade. But, as I wrote before, we should then feel that we were looking our worst, and in feeling thus, would tend to live down to it at the same time. Besides, what are "looks" so long as they don't absolutely "jar"? Most bores are beautiful, or rather, most beautiful women are bores, because they are so supremely content to offer the world nothing but their beauty. But, as a matter of fact, nothing so easily palls as a beautiful face in the eyes of those who behold its beauty every day. It is the woman who makes the best of the worst who gains and keeps up her reputation of being the greatest fascinator of her social circle.

There are certain bald heads which seem almost shameful in their nakedness. For myself,

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I am, as it were, as yet in my vest. But I can foresee a time when I, too, shall have to lose my modesty, since surely it is just as immodest to show a completely bald head in public as to exhibit a completely bare back. Then the problem will arise, shall I, or shall I not, wear a wig? And if so, when? Ah, that is always the great difficulty as we grow older! Nature is a jerry-builder at all times. The difficulty is, however, when we shall begin repairs and how much trouble is it worth our while to expend upon them, seeing that we only hold our bodies on an uncertain lease. After all, our personal appearance is surely something which is not exclusively our own personal affair. We don't see ourselves half so often as other people see us. Their feelings, then, should surely be considered. After all, if it be our duty to make this earth a happier place for our short sojourn upon it, is it not also our duty to make it as beautiful as we can? The trouble is that so many people — to return once more to the metaphor of the "house" — imagine that if they paint the windows a fresh colour and put stucco over those walls which are showing signs of wear and tear, the result is something that will look almost like a brand-new mansion. But

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alas! — as so often happens — the new paint and the stucco make the rest of the house look older and more dilapidated than ever! What then is to be done?

But enough of metaphor. The question is: Shall we seek to hide the ravages of time, or shall we just grow fat and withered and bald-headed without active protest? It is a problem which has to be faced by every one when they approach what poets have termed the twilight of their lives. (That description is all wrong, of course, since twilight mellows many a physical blemish, whereas fifty-five is as clear as mid-day!) The young, of course, tell the ageing to grow old gracefully. But elderly people discover that the line is a very difficult one to keep which divides the too-pompous from the too-skittish. To grow old doesn't make you feel at all graceful; on the contrary, it makes you feel annoyed, which is the arch-enemy of appearing calmly elegant. It's a problem, moreover, which you can't consider dispassionately — unless you are under twenty-five. Indeed, many people become "panicky" and rush out to buy an auburn transformation, or its equivalent in artifice. The trouble is that, though the hair be thin and grey, the mind beneath it is still quite glossy

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and flaxen. If only our physical life went hand in hand with our "heart," we should then see many a sexagenarian playing ping-pong with enjoyment and many a youth exhibiting in his club window a head as bald as a billiard ball and wave upon wave of billowing chins. No woman wants to paint her face; the question is, ought she to do it if it makes her look more presentable? Ought we not rather to thank her, instead of laughing at her? Ought she not rather to own it frankly and demand our gratitude, than do it in secret and hope for universal myopia? (Remember, I am only expounding the problem, not seeking to solve it.) Does there not come a time when Nature seems so careless of what was once her pride, that it becomes as well for us to ignore her disregard altogether and circumvent her callousness by visiting the beauty parlours of Bond Street? After all, a woman is only really as old as her heart, and many a man could well play Pan whose hair fills the "soul" of even an optimistic hairdresser with despair. Ought we not to take it as a compliment when a woman goes through an operation (uncertain, alas!) to remove her wrinkles? Wrinkles are not beautiful things; do we, then, not owe it to our friends to get rid of them? Old age is no

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more a disgrace than rheumatoid arthritis. But we don't wilfully exhibit our swollen joints to the world. Rather, we seek to hide them, not because we like to pretend they aren't there, but because the art of friendship is the art of creating an atmosphere of peace and beauty. On this account, how many people, perhaps, darken their fading eyelashes, rouge their yellowing cheek, and sport a wig? That the result is often more painful than the cause does not matter; it is the good intention that is important, and surely no one should be condemned because they "meant it kindly." Remember, such charitable frenzies seize us all at one time or another. Though people may hate us for them, by our "good intentions" alone do we feel ourselves supremely righteous! — so what matter?

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Mysteries — Real and Manufactured

HUMAN nature is full of mysteries; but they are not the kind of mysteries which make a great appeal to most people — perhaps, because they are so common, without, however, being really commonplace. The mystery of love, of friendship, or personality — these, for example, are sufficiently mysterious to rivet attention all the time. But people infinitely prefer “supernatural” knockings, haunted houses, and every kind of occult tarradiddle. Everything is, I suppose, commonplace to the commonplace mind, and there is nothing the commonplace mind revels in more completely than a hint of the vulgar supernatural. It cannot be that life is so utterly banal that anything extraordinary — whether it be fact or fiction — is like a green oasis in a bleak desert. Life is mysterious and is not at all banal — in fact, the mystery of a “haunted house” seems puerile by comparison. But most of us would far sooner investigate the mystery of a haunted house, which serves no useful purpose, than investigate

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the mystery of the “abnormal,” the solution of which would be eminently useful. I suppose it is that the mysteries of life are all apt to remain mysteries, and that to lay a ghost is like reading a novel, wherein everything comes out right at the end, and life is presented to us, not as a tangle of unexplained problems, so much as a bit of architecture — the design of which anybody possessed of eyes can grasp. If each man could plan his own destiny, we should all of us be the hero or heroine of a happy-ever-afterwards chapter. As it is, we do certainly feel that we are living in a kind of a story, but we are dragged into it and dropped out of it for no conceivable reason.

Most men, I fear, are Neros at heart. We all love to kill, sometimes for the mere sake of killing. At the same time we disguise our inclination under such high-sounding names as “patriotism,” and “sports,” “justice,” “religion,” occasionally even in the name of God. Unfortunately for our peace of mind, though fortunately for civilization, the Deity, or evolution, or some other mysterious agency, has evolved in our hearts something which, for want of a better explanation, men call “conscience.” Thus, though we may still kill, we are occasion-

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ally seized by moral qualms, and these qualms, alas! add a terrific spiritual conflict to our inner life. In books, however, we have no such misgivings. The villain in a work of fiction is a villain without any extenuating circumstances whatsoever. The chapter in which he at last meets his well-deserved violent end is the one chapter no reader will ever miss: the more violent his end, the more attention will the reader pay to the smallest detail. And yet, I suppose, if we really and truly and honestly analysed our own feelings we should find enthusiasm for his physical débâcle to be merely a subtly expressed admiration for his villainy. We are always least tolerant over the sins we are quite capable of committing, and, the more violent our vengeance, the nearer we ourselves are to fall into like temptation. Otherwise, how account for the extraordinary vogue of murder stories, dramas of crime and seduction, and the eager manner in which the newspaper containing full details of some foul deed is sold out almost before the ink is dry? No one would like to live in the same street with a criminal, since he might easily choose us as his next victim; but once having escaped that danger, there is nothing about him that we would not all gladly know. The his-

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tory of his victim interests us so little. He or she might be possibly termed "good," and could anything make duller reading? But the history of the criminal himself, well, we gloat over it in a kind of unholy glee — the kind of unholy glee in which we read or listen to those stories of evils which, although we may not realize it, we really would relish to accomplish, too, providing, of course, that we might not be found out! I always think that murders should be placed in different categories, like lovers are. There is the Great Love which transcends the trumpery Right or the trumpery Wrong; there is also the Great Cause, which robs many a murderer of its meanness. But all murderers are, as it were, bunched together, and every murderer is hanged. So the man who kills his enemy because he has deliberately ruined his life, and the man who kills another man merely to steal his watch, suffer the same penalty. Perhaps, in years to come, say in the millennium, justice will have the same nuances as the higher morality — that higher morality of which it is supposed to be the supreme defender.

Who knows but that, in the same way as we are really thrilled by the uncivilized things we might so easily accomplish if we dared, we are

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equally thrilled by any possibility of supernaturalness — because, deep down in our consciousness, we know that there is nothing for any of us beyond the materiality of this life? Do we only cheat ourselves — knowing full well, alas! that all the time we are being cheated, yet delighting in our illusion all the same? Again — who knows? That is the only reason I can find, however, for the popularity of the "haunted house" work of fiction. That we are all interested in what we like to think of as real evidence of the supernatural is easy to understand; but that we should be equally interested in purely imaginary supernormal mysteries needs quite another explanation.

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The Law of Ill-Luck

SAY what you will about good luck being primarily due to personal merit, the fact remains that ill-luck dogs the footsteps of some people out of all proportion to their deserts. There are certain men and women against whom the gods appear to have an insatiable grudge. All through their sad lives they are hunted down by disaster. Nothing goes right with them. And even when their bad fortune seems to have run itself out and a short period of calm follows in its train, it is not very long before some coincidence, so remarkable as to seem due more to some deliberately evil purpose than to mere chance, thrusts them back again once more into those tragic depths from which only the most heroic character can hope to emerge triumphant. Indeed, it would seem at times as if our happiness were really due to chance, and that our misery is caused by the deliberate machinations of some ruthless deity. Take the case of the totally incapacitated soldier. One would have

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thought that, if the gods really had some say in the destiny of men, they would at least find pity for those poor human creatures who, through no fault of their own, are forced by circumstances to live out all that remains of their lives in that state which most of us would consider to be little better than a living death. And yet, I know from my own knowledge and experience that the original affliction of most of these men is as nothing to the pain and suffering which they now endure when, by all the laws of human kindness, the worst ought surely to be past and over. I am appalled by the number of badly wounded men whose wounds never really heal; who after leaving hospital, are struck down by consumption or nervous disorders almost too terrible to contemplate, who become insane, or whose family affairs take such a disastrous turn that, even without their wounds, the tragedy of their home-life would provide sufficient misery to cloud forever the lives of most of us. It seems like piling overwhelming disaster upon unbearable suffering in their sad case. It is the comfortable, I find, who believe most earnestly in the love of God. The marvel is that so many men and women can still kneel in prayer under the weight of unmerited trouble which Destiny has accorded to

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them as their lot in life. It would seem, indeed, as if Fate loved to be the first to hit the man who is down and out, and thoroughly to enjoy doing so. Whatever people may say, the gods are the greatest snobs, and in their fight with men recognize no just law. They seemingly adore to carry coals to Newcastle and tantalize the tropical regions by a volcano. It is amusing, too, to watch how we all try, as it were, to escape the eyes of tragic destiny. Indeed there seem long periods when destiny seems to have forgotten all about us. From the little backwater in which we hide the outlook seems so safe. Then one dreary day something happens which suddenly breaks up forever the even tenor of our lives. We are rudely hurled from our security into the maelstrom where men live and die fighting for their very breath. And nobody really escapes this sudden awakening from that torpor which sometimes seems to us so near akin to happiness. Even those who, in order to escape, hide themselves away in nunneries or monasteries pass through periods when the peacefulness of their inner life is rudely broken, and, beneath their calm exterior, thus live out some of those mental and spiritual torments of which Hell surely is composed. Perhaps no man who is really alive

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is truly happy. Only the human turnips, living fatly in their serried and circumscribed rows, find that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds

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The Inarticulate Majority

THE art of keeping a good diary is as rare as the art of writing a good letter. Anybody can "jot things down," but few can make of these "jottings down" anything but so many extremely commonplace facts. As for the art of Letter-writing, it seems to be as lost as the art of Small Talk. The fact that "Auntie came to tea to-day," and that "Papa is still suffering from gout," conveys nothing of any interest to anybody. Yet such items compose the contents of, oh, so many letters, and so much of what people like to call a "nice long friendly chat." But if everybody kept a diary, and kept it really well, we should not need fiction to help to pass away our less occupied hours. For every life is a "story," but most people die with that story all untold. Sometimes they can't even recognize it as a story themselves, just a preface to the other life. Were they able to do so, they would be of some real help to the rising generation. But they mostly go on groping aimlessly forward, the future a fog, and the past almost as

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obscure. They may perhaps tell you the exact date when they first put their hair up, or when they were confirmed, or the circumstances of their first real kiss, in fact, anything which is as unilluminative as the dates of the kings of England. But what really would be interesting, as well as useful, would be to know exactly what were their innermost thoughts on each of these special occasions, since these things happen to everybody, and it is only the impressions which accompany them which make for differences, and thus for interest. But then, the queer characteristic of so many people is their utter inability to convey to others any clear impression of their real selves. They will imitate and repeat *ad nauseam*. In certain extreme instances, they will imitate and repeat so often that to echo seems to become at last their only natural function. They know at least one language, but they cannot convey anything personal by its means, only something somebody else has said before them. So they use their gift of speech only to tell us what they have been doing, or what other people have been doing — facts which have only a very limited usefulness, help us on our way not at all, and entertain us rarely. For the most part, we have also done

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likewise. I verily believe that most people "talk" more when they are by themselves than at any other time, which is a pity, since if they would only talk as they really think, would anything be more thrilling than human society? Whereas . . . ah well, perhaps I am a bit of a misanthrope!

If only just a few people could write the real inner history of their lives, what a wonder-book even the dullest — outwardly dull, that is — life-story would be! There are heaps of biographies which are interesting, but comparatively few which teach us very much of life. The writers are so intent upon telling us of the things they have done, the famous people they have known, that they have no space left to tell us of their own intimate philosophy. And every one has to think out his own philosophy, even though most seem fearful of explaining it. It is only when you catch a man in one of his unguarded moments that you realize what manner of man he is. For myself, I am old enough, happily, not to care what any man is, so long as he is something definite. It is the human "echo," the human "gramophone record," the human "mask," which make me infinitely prefer solitude to the company of the average human

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being. Better to have done something one ought not to have done than apparently done nothing at all, and done it pompously. And better, far better, think reprehensible thoughts than seek security by thinking entirely with the crowd.

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The People we Dislike

SO many people argue as if their prejudices were so many examples of pure logic, which they had arrived at after long hours of mental concentration. As a matter of fact prejudice is one of those subtle influences which sneak in where least expected, and colour our mental outlook with a "drabness" all their own. You will generally find the smart of a "personal affront" behind most prejudices — either that, or the egotistical inflation. If we might only disentangle our unreasonable prejudices from those arrived-at convictions for which we like to mistake them, we might then become so very wise, with that greatest wisdom of all, the wisdom which realizes its own limitations. But nowhere are our prejudices more apparent than in our dealing with other people. Our likes and our dislikes, who can truthfully account for them? Very few among us! The trouble, however, is that we often try to, and thereby we for the most part fail. Do we really admire the people who more clearly reflect ourselves, or

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are our idols just those with whom we most agreeably disagree? Do we admire most the people who are our direct opposite, or do we dislike them because they are not as we ourselves are? Certainly we shun most of all those vices, or rather those weaknesses, to which we ourselves are secretly addicted. We are usually blind to our virtues, whereas those "virtues" which are but vices verbally camouflaged, fill us with unshakable pride. A virtue which is conscious of itself is rarely more than a moral rectitude haunted by its own pretence. Thus, those people who possess virtues which we ourselves only inherit in a very qualified form, fill us with ecstatic enthusiasm. Usually the force of our emulation is in direct ratio to our natural desire to be just the opposite. According to the meanness of our worth do we prate about our high moral probity. We all practise auto-suggestion on ourselves, and those virtues of which a man boasts are generally those virtues to which he has not yet attained. Thus, to study a person's prejudices is usually to understand, not what he is, but what he would like to be if he dared. The trouble, however, is that people will always mistake their prejudices for sound logical conclusions, and expect their friends to be equally

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deceived. Tell me what a man hates, and I will tell you what that man wants to be. What he actually is can usually be measured, not by what he professes, but by those virtues in him to which he is supremely indifferent.

And among all the prejudices which are camouflaged as moral convictions, the moral prejudices of Reformers — with a capital R — are usually the most vindictive. Now the trouble with most Reformers — spelt with a capital R — is that they invariably desire to turn the world into a kind of glorified reformatory. Everybody, everything must be made exemplary at once. Or, if they can't immediately be made good, then they must be kept from evil by the fright of punishment. In the mind of these men there is no such thing as evolution. The world must be made perfect as quickly as a conjurer does the "rabbit trick." They leave "foundations" to take care of themselves, being wholly engrossed in pulling down the edifice. But a jerry-built house is better than no home at all, and only the stupid man wilfully destroys that home which is bad before he has discovered another which is better.

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The Devastating Propinquity of Married Life

CONSIDERING the devastating propinquity which convention imposes upon the married, the great wonder to me is that married life is not more often a kind of sullen truce between bored enemies, who only pretend friendship before the children and the servants. Never to be able to get away from the loved one, after the thrill of loving and being loved is over, is more the cause of irritation and discontent than any of those professed excuses by which married people explain the prosaic ending to their early ecstasy, both to each other as well as to the world. The failure of most marriages is founded, not on that "incompatibility of temper," that lack of mutual interests, that "unfaithfulness," which is the conventional explanation given and often believed, but on that very simple, but very potent fact that married people cannot get away from each other without offering a conventional reason for doing so or risking complete misunderstanding should they refrain. Love is a

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“ thrill,” but, alas! most young people so mis-understand the psychology of “ thrills ” that in the early years of their married life they work that “ thrill ” to death. There follows a period of shamed cessation, ending in the unacknowledged declaration that neither have any real “ thrills ” left to give the other. They are satiated; they are bored; for a time they are utterly weary of love and all that love may mean. Possibly there ensues friendship — a friendship symbolized in separate bedrooms. For the first time since the early period of their married life, they are comparatively happy. It is not that they love each other any the less, but it is a different kind of love; there is no pretence about it; neither of them is forced into the intimacy of ecstasy without feeling at all ecstatic. They can become themselves once more; they can live a little more freely their own life. The husband does not feel that he is living at the end of a chain, as it were, the other end being in the hands of his wife, who will demand explanations if he slips his neck through the noose or even jerks at his fetters. The wife no longer feels that she is a sultana who awaits her lord in a harem of one, and is expected to be found reclining on her cushion from the time that the

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husband returns from business in the evening until he departs again the next morning.

Even then, matrimony is strewn with pitfalls. Men and women are, I know, gregarious creatures, but they are also creatures of well-nigh uncontrollable moods — the most exigent of which is a periodical desire to be alone, to be free and untrammelled, to work off some inner conflict in solitude, far away from the interference of intimates. The conventions of married life recognize no such passing aberrations. The consequence is a conflict, the agony of which is acute, the memory of which echoes down the long passage of Time. Never to be able to get away from each other without long preliminary arrangements during which, in all probability, the desire to escape is assuaged — that simple fact is the cause of more married misery than any clash of opposing temperaments or wilful misunderstanding. The convention which insists that unmarried people should not share the same bedroom, but, once married, should never sleep apart without risk of “talk” in the servants’ hall, and inviting the possibility of a permanent estrangement between themselves, is the first and largest nail in the coffin of married love. It is, I suppose, a tradition handed down

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to us from the days when wives were the chattels of their husbands, and had to be prepared to play the woman whenever her husband felt inclined to recognize her sex. Which, of course, was convenient for the husband, but loathsomey degrading for the wife. Not unreasonably is the giving of herself by a woman spoken of as a "supreme honour." It is. But an honour obtained easily soon becomes a commonplace benefit. And this applies equally to men as well as to women. The moment love loses its mystery it loses its wonder. Familiarity breeds indifference, if not contempt, in other situations of intimate life than that of a master and his valet. Every woman desires to be loved passionately by the man she loves, but a woman who realizes that long custom has relegated her to the position of a hot-water bottle feels herself insulted, though no insult may be intended, and only a coarse convention is to be blamed. And the dangers arising out of such a situation are manifold. For no man, out of passionate love, can be faithful, should occasion arise; nor any woman — unless the ties of children and her own sense of womanly dignity counteract her purely human fancies. Most people fall readily in love, not because love is a blessing, but because it is an

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“adventure” and they are utterly bored. The conventions of matrimony seem designed directly to kill that “adventure.” They offer other “adventures,” it is true — the “adventure” of having children; the “adventure” of making two financial ends meet, the “adventure” of sticking together and paddling a mutual canoe; but these are not “adventures” at all — at best they are but “excursions” which leave one utterly tired out and inwardly disappointed by the fact that realization as usual fell so far short of anticipation. The “adventures” of being husband and wife present far fewer difficulties than the “adventure” of being merely man and woman. And because convention does not recognize this as being an “adventure” at all, but merely a side-line in joy, like a kind of sanctified debauch, married life proves too often a disappointment to the married. Unmarried, convention imposes a too great fastidiousness; once married, it opposes all signs of delicacy or reserve.

So few people seem to recognize the fact that, though a change of air is necessary for the health of the body, a certain amount of solitude is equally necessary to the health of the mind and spirit. Too long in the same place robs that

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place of its power to attract. In the same way, too long an intimacy with the same people reveals at last nothing but their imperfections and the subtle half-understood realization that one is living in chains and that the chains are irksome. One must be supernaturally placid to guard one's sweetness of temper confined day in day out, with the same people in the same room. A week of solitude would do most people more good than a dozen bottles of medicine. Until one is, as it were, in complete command of one's own spiritual sanctuary, one always feels as if one were fighting the battle of life arrayed in paper armour. When one has always to give of oneself and give again and again, keeping on giving, there follows a spiritual and mental emptiness which some call "boredom" and some a "disappointment with life." But, in reality, people are not bored, they are not disappointed. The truth is that they seem to have mislaid themselves, lost their individuality in a too-long attempt to dove-tail their own idiosyncrasies into the idiosyncrasies of those with whom they are forced to live. We always hate secretly those whom we have found out and those who have found us out in their turn — when there is no forgiveness on either side. The conventions

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of matrimony encourage that sad discovery within a twelve-month. A not-too-lengthy absence does indeed make the heart grow fonder, but, of infinitely more value — it places the virtues of the departed in a high light. Distance lends enchantment to the absent, just as it does to a factory chimney. If no man is a hero to his own valet, what indeed must he look to his own wife? We must need surround ourselves by a kind of glamour if we would keep love; but how is it possible to preserve that “glamour” when day in day out and nearly all day long one must live and sleep in such close intimacy with another that we may not snore, we may not feel “fed up,” we may not feel ill-tempered, morose, or “below par” without being found out. The axiom to guard a little of oneself for oneself alone, if one would be loved for ever, is impossible when one lives so everlasting “on view” that even those things of which we feel ashamed and would hide from prying eyes, are openly exhibited for all those who see to chronicle. The reason that a man is so often faithful longer to his mistress than to his wife, as a woman is longer faithful to her lover than to her husband, is because they see each other more rarely and so obtain that solitude in which their minds and

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hearts may develop, and, giving of themselves to the loved-one at last, they may have something fresh to give, not a threadbare edition of those fascinating qualities which too quickly become stale because they were employed too often. Thus the interludes of spiritual and mental dullness — which we all of us go through — will not dim the glamour of their love.

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The “Secret” we can never Impart

IF only we might play occasionally the rôle of director of our own destiny — how much more effective we would make the story which is our life! The ways of God are so often inscrutable, that there seems to us at times to be no design in them whatsoever. Sometimes in our despair we cling to the faith which tells us that after death all will be made clear. And yet the doubt lingers in our hearts that this enlightenment will require the supernatural power of a miracle to smooth out the spiritual roughness of our thwarted earthly desires. I sometimes think that the reason why fiction is so popular is not because fiction ever teaches the reader anything vital about life, but it satisfies him by its efforts to show Divine Justice the proper way to go about its business. In books, everything happens before it is too late, and usually in just the most satisfactory kind of manner. There may be “floods of tears” for a long while, but sooner or later they dry up; the wicked people are properly punished and the

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good suitably rewarded. In fact, everything comes right after having been wrong for at least three hundred pages. Fiction is, indeed, a kind of brief holiday away from the actual — and, as such, is at all times refreshing. It is, as it were, the “fairy tale” which one lonely person tells to others, equally lonely. Happy people don’t, as a rule, devour novels. Their lives are sufficiently entertaining. They are the desolate who thrill to the justice of this purely imaginary world. In real life, justice seems such a very haphazard affair. It is always an even chance if one be punished for one’s own inherited weaknesses; whether one be rewarded for one’s good intentions or merely for those bad ones which nobody ever found out. Happy circumstances surround certain people, while others have “crosses” piled upon them. Those who desire life are struck down, and those who yearn for the forgetfulness of oblivion live to be centenarians. If only we knew the “reason why” we might become more philosophical. As it is, we are often exasperated because there seems no rhyme nor reason in so many things at all — and “Kismet” is the surrender-cry of those who have grown weary of finding arguments for the inscrutable working of their fate. The Best within us is too

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often like a flower withering in darkness, while the Worst never fades for lack of opportunity to develop. As men and women pass us continually like a human procession, certain members of which dart out from the classified ranks in which they march, to clasp our hands in friendship and understanding, so opportunities parade themselves perpetually before us — though it is often only those to which we yearn to turn a blind eye which come to us in all their most alluring aspect. Other people see them not — they are no temptation to them. But they single us out to tantalize us forever by their presence, until life becomes one long fight against enemies only visible to ourselves: we yearn for respite, while knowing only too clearly that there will never be a respite so long as we live and breathe and have our human being. So in our inner despair we turn to God — since God is only a living God to the desolate, the tired, and the lonely. The others are quite satisfied by life. If they worship a Being above and beyond themselves, it is often through fear that He may perchance rob them of that fortunate existence, or mar its blessings by some tragic untoward circumstance. But the desolate, the tired, and the lonely know that they have “touched rock bottom” and until

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one has touched rock bottom one has only an academic and theoretical need of anything beyond the fleshpots of Egypt. God is the “ Dream ” to which the unhappy turn when destiny has made dreaming the only happy circumstance in life, the only faint shadow of happiness into which Reality cannot thrust its talons — to tear asunder all that we hold most dear. And some seek Him in churches — not as members of that best-dressed procession who, as it were, pay a polite “ call ” upon Him on Sunday morning, but as those who go there to pray when they know that His House will be deserted and there will be not obsolete dogma, nor mechanically conducted service, nor the disturbing influence of the human crowd, to come between them and the One from whom they seek consolation. And some find Him in Nature, in Art and Music, in Beauty in all its manifestations; in unobtrusive “ good work ” and solitude wheresoever they may find it.

And some time or other, in the life of each one of us, there comes a period when Fate, in league with our enemies, seems to have planned to make our history a concentrated morsel of tragic-farce, with all the tragedy revealed only to our own consciousness and all the “ farce ” only in the

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consciousness of other people. It is then that we yearn, more than anything else, to sneak away and hide ourselves. We retire when we can from the wilderness which seems to surround us, into that green oasis which lies within us and which few things untoward seem able to disturb. There it is that we find a renewed spiritual force by the strength of which we can return again to the field of battle, there to fight on and on. It is a blessed and very wonderful moment — this moment when outrageous fate thrusts us back upon ourselves to discover within our own hearts a peace which can never afterwards be destroyed. But it takes a long succession of angry blows before we seek this sanctuary within ourselves. But seek it we always have to, at some time or another; and find it we generally do, though we find it only through tears. At last there comes a day when things have gone so wrong that we are henceforth indifferent to their progress. We cease any longer to struggle against the evil fate which dogs our footsteps. Then it is that the *wonderful thing* happens. We think that we can never be really happy again; when lo and behold! happiness returns to us. It may not be that kind of happiness which we called "happiness" before the clouds gath-

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ered and the storm burst; but there is in it a peace, a cessation from vain hopes, which comforts us more than we can express. Almost it would seem that we can shrug our shoulders at whatever may befall us in the future. We have learned a secret; we have found a sanctuary which only death itself can disturb — and which death, we hope, will make forever permanent. Some call it “God”; some philosophy; most of us can never give it a name. Now it would seem that we have ceased to be blinded merely by “superficialities,” that we have the power to see right through them into the very heart of things. We see the loveliness of Nature through new eyes, and the meaning of life, even though we yet may not fully understand it, possesses a significance which comes to us as a new revelation. Let the world rage how it will; let Destiny stalk us like an infuriated huntsman — we have ceased to care. Within us there is an everlasting peace which looks on unafraid and mockingly. Those who have lived out their lives to its dregs will understand what I mean. Mostly we cannot talk of it — it is too precious to be described by words. It is just a “secret” that we can never impart.

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The Religion of the Average Man

I WAS brought up on the Christian faith — Church of England denomination. I was told the Bible stories. I went to Sunday School — learning parrot-wise the Collect, Gospel and Epistle for each week. Now, as I look back upon those days, I see that this enforced visit was due principally to my parents' desire to get their children out of the house for a space, rather than to a belief that they would be morally benefited thereby. Naturally, being a child, I hated both Sunday and Sunday School. I associated the day with stiff clean collars, Eton suits, and four hours, divided into two parts, of complete, unmitigated boredom — called Morning and Evening Service. Every morning my mother read three short prayers in the dining-room — her children kneeling on the floor with their heads buried in easy-chairs, and the servants ranged round the wall in various attitudes of vacant immobility. During these daily periods of thanksgiving or beseeching, I studied upholstery far more intently than I listened to the

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Word of God, and a fly settling on the "furniture plush" with which the chairs were covered was an "event" far more exciting than the raising of Lazarus from the dead. God, to my childish imagination, was an old man perpetually angry with His children. I never doubted for an instant His reality, nor wondered at His anger. I took Him for granted — prayed to Him when I must; thanked Him when I was told, and associated His desires with all the dullest moments of my child-life. I said I loved Him — because to own indifference would, I felt assured, have brought down His vengeance upon my head. In reality I had no need of Him. I was a child, healthy, brought up in fairly comfortable circumstances. If He were associated with anything in my childish mind, He was associated with all those things least agreeable — death, funerals, hell, church service, Sunday School, peevish old people, nightmares, and learning the Collect, Epistle and Gospel each week by heart. I bore with Him as I bore with learning lessons, Sunday clothes and long sermons, resigned to the inevitable, and so familiar with it as to neither question its necessity nor protest against it.

Briefly, religion was just a tiresome observance, and God some one far away, yet always

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near at hand when least wanted. Some one to be propitiated at all times and prayed to occasionally. Never, however, was He a reality — unless I happened to have done wrong; and as for religion — it was something kept for the five minutes preceding breakfast and bedtime, and all day on Sunday. If there was any moment when religion became an actuality, it was during the hymns — the words of which I did not trouble to understand, but the melodies of which filled my young heart with gladness, sometimes making my childish imagination soar to celestial heights where I stood among the angels in a garden something like the one surrounding my own home — a home, however, where there were no lessons or other unpleasant occupations, but games all day long and universal happiness everywhere.

Thus it is that to-day, when I am grown up, the music of such hymns as "Jesus, Lover of my soul," "Abide with me," and "The sower went forth sowing," bring back to me the ecstasy of childhood more vividly than any other youthful association. These favourite old hymns were, indeed, the only actual living force of my religion. The Bible, Sunday services, the Word of God as it was propounded to me by my parents,

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and later on at school, were all associated with boredom — dull, lifeless periods; enforced gloom cast on a nature habitually sunny.

And this, I believe, is the experience of most children. Religion as a practical code, as a beautiful faith to inspire each action of the humdrum daily round, was unimaginable — since it was never pointed out. Words . . . words . . . words — that was all it meant to me; all it means to the vast majority of children. Rarely was it associated with bright and happy things, with beauty and joy — those facts which appeal so greatly to children. If God was linked with any important earthly thing, He was linked with “don’t” and with fairy stories — not half so enchanting as Cinderella and Jack and the Beanstalk — “true” stories, which children are still being told, nor do they yet doubt their truth, since grown-up people are thus the more secure of Divine approbation. And children, even now, accept this interpretation of Bible stories because they are given no other. Parents are still incurable opportunists and time-servers in regard to religion.

Looking back on my own childhood, and considering myself to have been an average child, it seems to me that one of the saddest experiences

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of that period was my childish effort to reconcile the religion my elders taught me with the religion I observed they practised among themselves. Not that the realization was particularly clear; rather it was a state of semi-conscious "puzzlement" — a state which alienated God and religion from all acts performed during the six days of the week and brought them into line on Sundays only. Gradually there was borne upon my childish mind the fact that what was essential for children in regard to keeping the Word of God, could quite well be neglected by grown-up people without the least risk of falling from grace. To lie was sinful, but to say "not at home" when somebody called at the wrong time, was not apparently a lie at all — or at least one far removed from anything likely to call down the anger of God upon one's head, as, for example, denying that one stole a spoonful of strawberry jam, or declaring one had been to Sunday School when one had gone for a happy walk instead. As a child it made me simply long to be grown up. Once grown up I fancied I could quite easily pretend illness and walk out of church before the sermon, even if I went to church at all — which seemed a purely voluntary action. Being grown up obviated the necessity

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of even saying prayers on a cold night before getting into bed. Certainly grown-up people found it quite unnecessary to their salvation to learn the Collect, and seemingly they could swear without the least impunity. Though toys were locked away in the nursery and only hymn tunes allowed on the piano, grown-up people could play whist, providing the Rector did not know, and "keeping holy the Sabbath day" did not apparently apply to coachmen, servants, or prevent a furtive game of tennis by their employers, providing the tennis lawn was not within view of the road. Only semi-consciously, I say, did I realize these two varying codes of religious observance, but even with the half-consciousness with which I observed them, I felt an ever-growing dislike of religion, since all the dull parts of it appeared only to apply to me — because I was a child. As I said before, practical Christianity was not taught me, only the dreary routine of dreary observances — complying with which I must need also call myself a "miserable sinner" and act as such — provided also I pulled up my trouser-legs before kneeling down, and got up from my knees when other people did.

Now that I am grown-up I never cease from feeling amazement that parents should still con-

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tinue to teach their children Biblical stories in which they have long since ceased to believe themselves. Probably they think it doesn't matter; that, in any case their children will come to no harm when they discover eventually that much they had been taught as true, turns out in reality to be merely "legend," with all the miraculous falsity of most legends. But I do believe that that period of violent atheism which most young people go through about the age of twenty — a period which can have such devastating effect on their inner life — is principally due to the fact that they have been told so many Biblical "tarradiddles" were inspired by God Himself that, when they begin to doubt them, and to find that those people who told them have not believed in them themselves for years, they suddenly discard religion altogether and fight it with all the fury of those who realize that they have been bamboozled. To deny God makes them feel grown-up; it is also a method by which they may revenge themselves on their elders who too long deceived them. From the age of twenty to the age of thirty is usually the period of youthful blasphemy. There is no God, and thus every religious rite is rank foolishness — against which Youth will wage perpetual warfare. Any

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falsehood which is told to children as a truthful fact, is a deliberate crime against the most trustful, the most hopeful and most sincere period of a man's life. The "spirit" which animates religious belief is never explained to them. On the contrary they are merely given so many unessential facts, masquerading as articles of faith necessary to salvation, that when the moment arrives and the young mind begins to question, to make discoveries for itself, the anger which these questions and discoveries arouse, not only undermines any particles of spiritual beauty which religion may have revealed to them, but turns them deliberately into fierce antagonists of all things appertaining to the life of the "soul." They have been stuffed with creeds, and these creeds have taught them no philosophy of conduct. So they start their adult life, not only without any religion whatever, but with a fury against all those people and institutions which have religion for their inspiration. And the inner loneliness of Youth which has discovered that there is no God, is a loneliness never equalled in tragic solitude during any subsequent period of life. So they become materialists in the worst sense. It is not their fault. Their parents and teachers have spent years in pav-

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ing the way. Atheism is but the aftermath of these misdirected efforts. Youth is their victim.

In its anger against what has been taught as "religion" youth sometimes finds itself in open conflict with a certain section of the world. Some young people conform outwardly and live at peace; but most — and youth is ever the period of insurgency — wage ceaseless warfare, not only against the Church, which seems to them to represent so much hypocrisy, but also against those of its ministers whom Youth, in its unreason, believes to batten upon these falsehoods, this dishonest leadership of the ignorant. I often wonder whether the Churches ever ask themselves why the congregation which frequents them is so often composed of either very young or very old people. There are so few among them in the early-middle or later-middle life. The cynic will of course assert that the former attend because they must, the latter because they are becoming afraid. But the real significance goes much deeper than that. The revolt by young people against the false religion they were taught when children usually lasts for ten or twenty years. After that they begin to find that real religion, which is to comfort and

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inspire them in their old age, is a religion founded, not on any creed, still less on any dogma, but on the need of the soul to satisfy its longing for some faith above and beyond the physical appetites, a longing which seeks also to find expression in purely human acts. It is the religion without a Church, founded on experience alone, and on those evidences of some Divine regard which are occasionally revealed to all feeling men and women as they journey through life. The pageantry of the seasons; Nature in all her loveliness, in all her moods; the kindness of the poor to poorer people; the silent acts of heroism which suffering and loss bring forth; true charity which seeks to cover up its own tracks; the trustful innocence of little children; music, poetry, the arts; the love of friends; the love of man and woman; the well-nigh miraculous courage of the humble; the kindly feeling which in a world of callous indifference runs like a thread of pure gold — these are, to my mind, greater evidence of the Godhead in man, the Divine creation of the world than all the warring creeds, the dogmas, the religious rites, the whole library of "inspired books," every statement that seeks to reveal the reality of God to His children. So I do not seek

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for Him in the places dedicated to worship of Him. My temple — if you can call it a “temple” — is in the world of men and women, in the wide open spaces of the earth.

There alone do I find a practical answer to my questioning; there alone do I find some foundation for my faith. Such a “religion” cares naught if the Bible be inspired by God or merely compiled through centuries of time by men themselves; if Christ be really Divine, or merely a man of God-like attributes; if belief in the Trinity, in the Resurrection, in the Atonement be necessary or unimportant. Perhaps it is not a “religion” at all, but merely a philosophy of conduct, inspired by a definite, if impossible, ideal. In any case it draws no comfort from any dogmatic assertion of Life after Death. It recognizes a Life on earth and how gloriously alike to Heaven it could be made if only the World — and in that world I of course include myself — could realize practically even eighty per cent of that ideal. I hold no theory concerning the Life hereafter. I cannot — no matter how earnestly I will. But life, here on earth, is an actuality. To waste it in merely a prayerful self-preparation for another, is to my mind a loss of a divine opportunity. In however small and

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incompetent a way a man may strive to realize his ideal state here on earth, he will surely have done all that God can require of him, should there be a God. At any rate he will be able then to look his Maker in the face — and that to my mind is better than to go towards Him grovelling and suppliant. It gives to a man pride in his human destiny. And human life is surely something more than a long submissive cajoling of those who guard the portals of some far-off heaven. Heaven is here around us — or it can be, in however small an extent, if we try to make it a reality.

But the majority of men and women do not arrive at this religion-without-dogma until they have passed many miserable years of grave doubt, sometimes in active revolt against the preaching of the Churches. Life and experience seem to have shown them that the God of Love they are expected to worship is non-existent. No such God, they say to themselves, could allow the cruelty and injustice of the world to go on unrevenged. Man, as they watch and observe him and have their dealings with him, is far too imperfect a creature ever to be called a direct inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Thus to entitle him is to elevate him far beyond any

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evidence of his deserts — either that, or to debase a divine perfection.

Nor do the Churches seem able to keep their Christian ideal perpetually before the eyes of men — by giving them those examples of love, charity and forgiveness which, if there be a God, must surely rank among His first commands. To be mixed up with professed religion is to feel oneself mixed up in a game of hocus-pocus, in which the method of worship seems to signify little of that spirit which should rightly animate an act of adoration. Dogma and ritual seem to have come between Christ and the vast multitude of men and women who would seek His consolation in those temples erected for His worship. The God men find in the Churches is a God that the world outside has outgrown. They will not accept the God of the Old Testament — since He seems no God at all but rather the personification of all those acts of selfishness and revenge which make the human world such a wilderness of despair too often. And the Christ of the New Testament — that gentle, lowly, all-loving, all-forgiving divinity — seems nowhere to be found in this mixture of inward mysticism and outward magnificence. He lives in the world outside — in the thousand-and-one acts of

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generosity, courage, true Christian charity, which run like a thread of pure gold through men's intercourse with his brother-men. A hospital ward seems to be fuller of the presence of God than those Divine services which preach the selfsame dogma, perform the selfsame elaborate rituals daily in glorification of His name. It is among men, and not in the Churches, where the presence of Christ is more apparent. The divine courage with which so many people face suffering and disaster; the thousand-and-one acts of kindness we receive from our brother men and women throughout life; the kindness of the poor to the poor; the helpful sympathy which so many people give ungrudgingly and gladly to those less fortunate than themselves — these bring us far clearer evidence of the spark of divinity animating men's souls than all the professed "divine revelation" to believe in which the Churches declare alone they may be "saved." This is the faith which buoys up the spirits of the average man. He views the quarrels of the Churches over hair-splitting definitions of the professed Words of God with indifference, if not with disdain. He goes out into the world of men — an atheist maybe, in the eyes of Religion, but with a belief in the innate goodness of other men,

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taken in the aggregate, which needs no dogmatic assertion. He sees that in the heart of humanity there is a spark of something divine which will at length, and at last, make the world of men worthy of their heavenly birthright. In religion, as it is preached in the Churches, he only finds a tyrannical uncharitableness which would elevate the God of Anger above the God of Love. But the God of Love is the only God he finds it in his heart to worship. He discovers in the Churches, for example, that the best seats are reserved for the "best people," and the poor are conveniently thrust into the back pews. He hears a priest repeating in a sing-song tone prayers and exhortations which have been repeated so often, and listened to so continually that they seem to have lost, both for the priest and his congregation, any actual significance. He hears passages read from the Bible — the lust and vindictiveness of which fill him with disgust. He watches some more or less meaningless ritual performed as if it were necessary to salvation, not only to perform, but also to regard. He discovers that the Churches are, for the most part, identified with ideas and practices which for the modern man have little or no interest, and less importance. As he watches their perpetual war-

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fare over those questions which can have not the least influence on conduct — which, after all, is the only means by which religion may prove its reality — he becomes conscious of the fact that he has moved out of the world in which the Churches were born and are, apparently, still living. It is not that men have deliberately left the Churches to indulge in greater selfishness and sin; but they have completely outgrown them. Education and the discovery of science have advanced humanity immeasurably; but the Churches, instead of welcoming this greater knowledge, these vital discoveries, have disowned them where they could; — not because they were sinful, but because they undermined some trivial incident in the Bible which they had for centuries declared to be evidence of divine creation. To the average man, the Churches are but remnants of some decaying city which has lived beyond its period of active usefulness, because it has lost touch with the aspirations and problems which animate and vex men's hearts in the modern world. The Average Man asks for some practical evidence from the Churches of that Christian understanding and helpfulness for which they should stand, and he is given so many symbols as meaningless to him as a hieroglyphic

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on an Egyptian tomb. He suspects that the Churches are far more interested in their own magnificent self-importance than in the world which they should rightly serve as well as lead. In all those urgent reforms which would add so greatly to the happiness of mankind, he finds the Churches playing, more or less, a reactionary part. After nearly two thousand years of Christianity he found that he was asked to sacrifice his own life and the lives of his sons in a war — the greatest that the world has so far known. He finds the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches perpetually warring against each other — not because either of them encourages humanity to sink below those ideals which both religions have set up for man's inspiration, but simply because, to give but a single instance; the Protestant Church ignores the divinity of the Virgin Mother of Christ, and the Roman Catholic insists thereon. The Average Man says within his own heart, that in either case it really does not matter. Probably he denies that she was a virgin at all — nor does he feel any less respect for her because she was merely a woman like his wife or his mother. But briefly, he cannot be troubled by those things which are to him so glaringly unessential to the welfare and hap-

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piness of human life, and to the fulfilling of those divine injunctions which Christ gave the world so wonderfully, those injunctions by which alone mankind will raise himself above the level of the beasts and prove himself worthy of any wider life after death. If the average man has any professed religion to-day, it is the religion of Christian democracy. And because ancient religions have proved themselves in the long ago, and still prove themselves to-day, so furiously undemocratic, he leaves professed religion severely alone and lives out his own interpretation of the divine ideal as he can make it practical in his daily life. He will return to the Church when the Church places itself in the vanguard of human progress. He will return to the Church, when he can hope to find there no longer the violent assertions of scientifically disproved dogma, the perpetual performance of empty rituals; he will give his services when he sees the clergy coming forth into the world to live the lives of men working among other men, no longer in the capacity of schoolmasters, but as embodiments of practical helpfulness, encouragement, charity and true manliness. He will attend religious services when the services will include everything that is beautiful in art, music

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and literature, no matter how unsectarian may be their origin. He will come back to the Churches when the Churches stand together as one Church, vigorous defenders of the human defenceless, no matter of what race or creed; inspired by one universal mighty effort to bring justice everywhere throughout the earth; one supreme fight to make of human life no mere selfish preparation for a problematical heaven, but an existence showing something of heaven itself here upon earth. He wants his Church to be the figure-head of all that appertains to social progress; a Church in which every beautiful, unselfish achievement and act will be considered "sacred"; a Church which will forget its theology and dogma, and live only for the emancipation of humanity from those many evils from which it has suffered so cruelly throughout the ages.

Wherever he finds this ideal — to it the Average Man gives his whole-hearted worship. In that he now often disowns the God as proclaimed in the Churches — it may be said that he disowns Him only to find Him over again for himself. God creeps back into his heart — just when he has become accustomed to declare that there is no God at all, because religions have dis-

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gusted him with their interpretations. Dogma he will not have, nor theology, nor any belief that religion is a kind of never-ending propitiating of some egotistical deity. He knows that everything that is beautiful, charitable, unselfish, heroic; everything which makes for the happiness and betterment of mankind in general, is not only divinely inspired, but "sacred" in the eyes of the Most High. He knows that religion should be the most modern thing on earth, in that it seeks unceasingly for greater knowledge. He knows that religion is not so much a creed as an inspired championship of the defenseless, the weak and the suffering. In his mind, nothing is necessary to that religion but the simple fact that where there is misery it must be assuaged; where there is wrong, it must be righted; where there is a chance of human progress, the means must be fought for with all the strength and determination at command. Nothing shall be allowed to stand in the way of these things — no tradition, no prejudice, no scientifically disproved belief. The earth must be made a place where men laugh more often than they weep; where they may find happiness and enjoyment more often than renunciation and despair; where each man is given the selfsame chance —

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and the best man wins; where there are no slums, nor warfare, indecent poverty, nor indecent riches; a place where, when the Last Day dawns, men can bravely face their Creator — proud that the gifts which He has given them — the gifts of intelligence, loving-kindness and “vision” — have not been neglected, nor wasted, but have been gloriously fulfilled.

The religion of the Average Man is the religion of humanity — he can conceive no greater nor more inspiring creed than that. His God is a practical God. He is a God who neither hides Himself away in mystery, nor deliberately interferes with human conduct — either for good or ill. He is a God who has given His children the means to work out their own salvation. Within the heart of each one of us there is a “still small voice” which speaks of some divine creation louder than all the dogmatic assertions of the Churches. It is this “still small voice” which to the Average Man is — God. It is the spirit within him which inspires him to do for himself all that religious faith leaves to some supernatural Power to accomplish. The knowledge fills him with pride. It subdues the question as to whether there be a God or no; if He be all-loving, all-powerful — an ultimate Judge, upon

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whose forgiveness he can rely. He just goes on his way, proud in the fact that humanity has within its own heart the power eventually to work out its own most glorious destiny, and prove itself worthy of its divine creation. If there be no God outside this spirit, yet the knowledge that he possesses this spiritual force spurs him onward to perform, in his humble, obscure way, the part of Him who, if He exists, would be truly divine.

As Henley, the poet, wrote:—

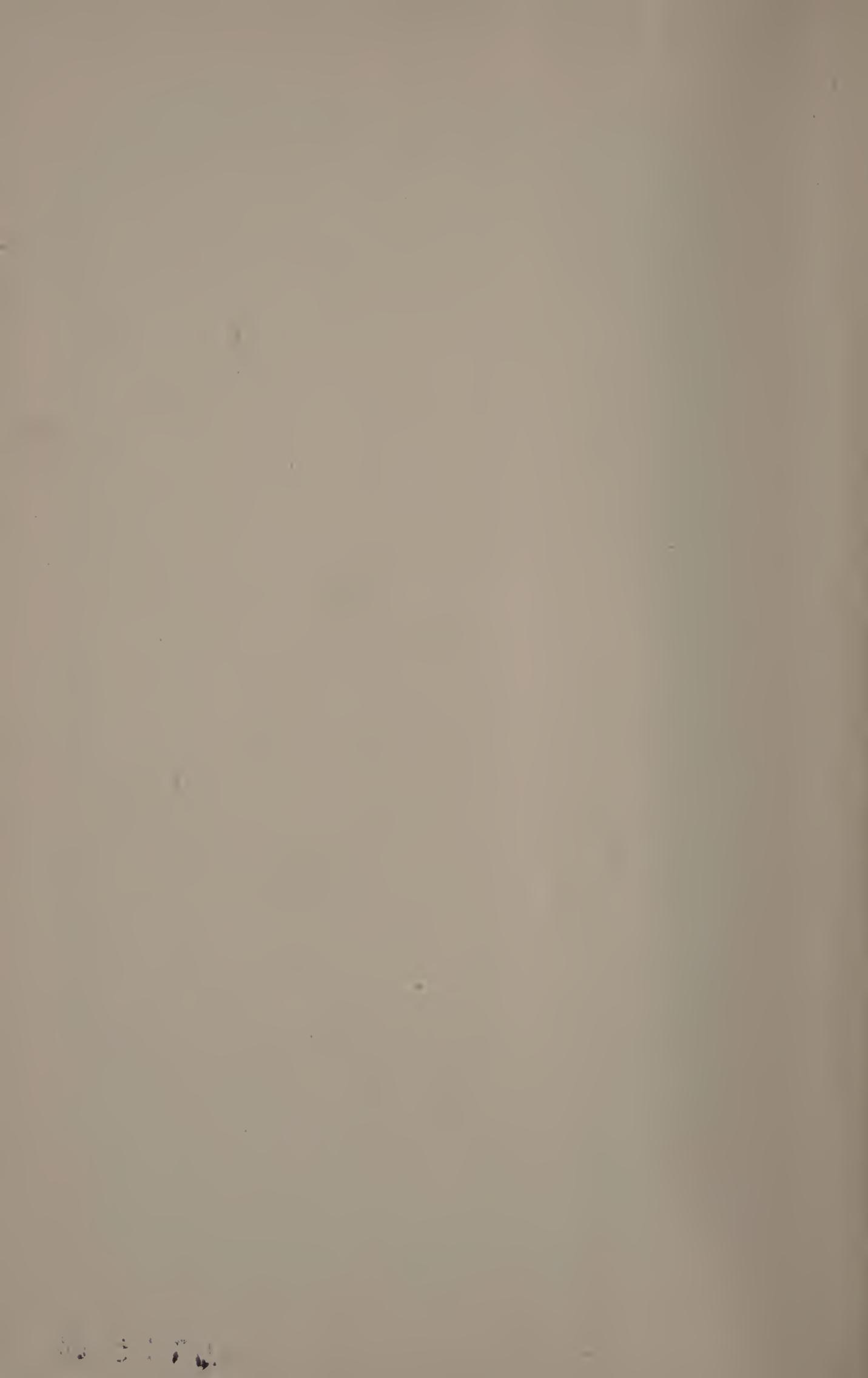
. . . Need we care
What is to come?
. . . We have fulfilled ourselves, and we can dare
And we can conquer, though we may not share
In the rich quiet of the afterglow.

Speaking personally, I am firmly convinced that there *ought* to be a God, and a life hereafter. But my faith in these two facts is paralysed by the haunting doubt that neither may be a reality after all. On the whole, I believe that the best way to face such a doubt is not to think about it at all, or as little as we may. Truly, the one great question which really concerns us, and most certainly concerns God — if there be a God — in his relation to ourselves, is *this* Life and what we do in the world. Don't

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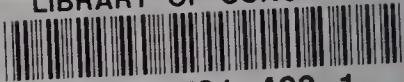
ask yourself over and over again *if* there be a God, *act as if He really and truly existed*, and just so far as it is possible for you, play His part on earth, then all will surely be well with your immortal soul. And if the reward of it all — if reward you seek — be but a sleep eternal, do not weep. If you have done your very best, you will have left the world happier and better and more beautiful for your brief sojourn therein. And surely no God can ask of His children a greater evidence of their love.

THE END.



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